# THE AMERICAN WEST

COVER: A warrior's successes in combat and in the ancient art of horse-stealing are proudly recounted on a Blackfoot buffalo robe in the collection of the Browning, Montana, Indian Museum.

*(Photograph by David Muench)*

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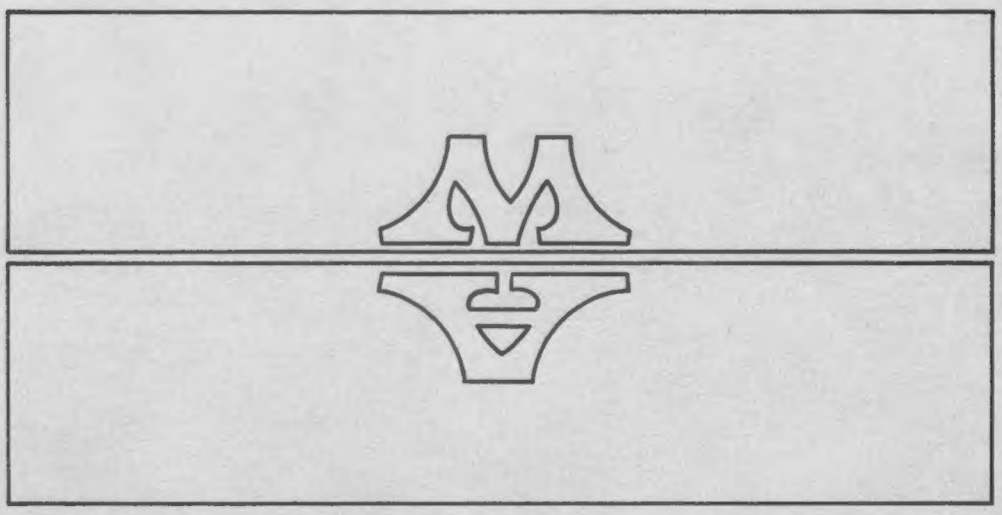

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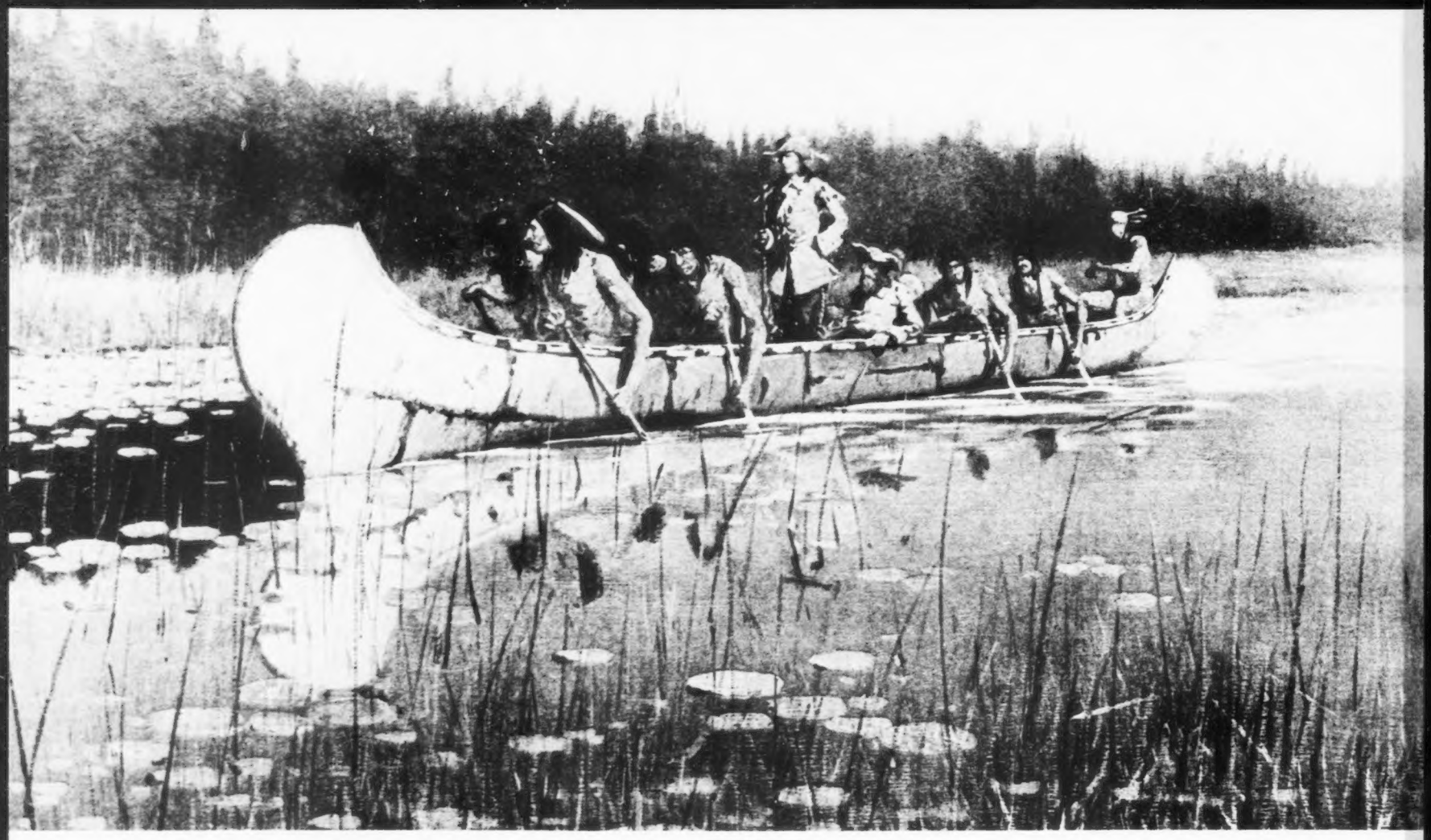
***Seeing the schoolchildren in Nome, Alaska's, 1901 Independence Day parade must have caused many a half-broke miner to recall the home and family he had left behind. For an 1875 celebration of the Glorious Fourth, see page 24.***

BY E. A. HEGG; CULVER PICTURES



*The archetypal French westerners Radisson and Groseilliers defected to the English; most others stayed true to France.*

*A Bicentennial Trilogy*

# The Farthest with the Fewest

## *If territories were won by brilliant gambits, grand gestures, and* courage sans peur, *the American West might be French today*

by Larry L. Meyer

FRANCE was on the move in the early eighteenth century, and that movement was west. It was almost as though some Frenchmen removed to the New World were themselves made new men; as though the place that had been denied them in Provence or Normandy or Gascony was to be found in the West of New France, where first the sun downed behind the purple shimmer of northern lakes, then beyond the waving curtain of breast-high prairie grass, and finally over the backlit shark's teeth of distant mountains that still beckoned. It amounted to a kind of tropism for those who dressed like Indians in the skins of animals and wore moccasins or snowshoes to follow the light. It was westering, more than a century before there was an English word to describe the phenomenon of chasing the sun over the American West.

They chose mostly the rivers as avenues into the open-ended land they called Louisiana. The rivers of Canada had already served them or their fathers and their grandfathers well. Where the rivers took them was always a place beyond the white man's laws and customs, so that whatever they became known as—*voyageurs, coureurs de bois,* fur hounds, squaw men—they were in a real sense what many called them: outlaws. Those who lived beyond the law; those who preferred the company of *sauvages* to their own kind. Fortunately, a few who went west were men of higher station—gentlemen-born, or self-made, or gentlemen-in-the-making—who were literate and left records, fragmentary though they be. This handful was no less brave or resourceful than

BY FREDERIC REMINGTON; MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

their unlettered countrymen, and it was they who left upon the West larger-than-life legends with their wit, daring, and plain old *panache*.

No sooner was France precariously positioned in the lower Mississippi Valley at the turn of the century than she began looking westward, the direction of rival Spain and the metallic plum that seemed not far from imperial reach. As early as 1705, the French standard-bearer Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, had sent men exploring up the Red River, perhaps as far as the Rio Grande, and already French clothes and arms were turning up in New Mexico. Then, in 1713, when Louisiana was a private enterprise under the financier Antoine Crozat, who expected his wealth to come from trade with the Spaniards, Governor Cadillac dispatched another party up the Red in answer to a singular letter from a priest named Hidalgo. The unhappy Franciscan had been forced to abandon his mission of San Francisco and thought by inviting the French to come west his own neglectful Spanish sponsors would be prodded to reoccupy Texas. Cadillac did not view the invitation as an official carte blanche to westward expansion, but he knew an opportunity when he saw one, even if it was risky. To head the twenty-four-man mission of questionable mercy, with its 10,000 *livres'* worth of trade goods, he chose a thirty-five-year-old Canadian who had been with Bienville since 1699.

Cadillac could not have chosen better. Louis Juchereau de St. Denis was the first, if not the foremost, of France's westerners. He was a flesh-and-blood fugitive from picaresque fiction, tall, handsome, educated, polite, diplomatic, witty, and above all brazen—an adventurer with an instinctive knowledge of the weaknesses of those who would stand in his way. Soon after founding Natchitoches, in the midst of the Red River Indians after whom the trading post was named, he set off with three other Frenchmen south over red hills toward the Sabine River. An Indian attack only delayed him. When he reached the Rio Grande, the sunny Spanish settlement of San Juan Bautista had reason to rouse itself from siesta.

No one was more roused than Don Diego Ramon by the arrival of the Frenchman who came out of the dust dressed in tailored finery, well cared for by his part-time valet, part-time press agent, Medar Jalot. What was the meaning of this? the Spanish commander must have asked himself. Did the upstart not know that foreign trade with new Spain was forbidden by royal edict? The upstart knew, all right. There was little that St. Denis did not know, including an opportunity supported by the bluff of Hidalgo's letter and a passport signed by the governor of Louisiana. He also knew a pretty girl when he saw one. While Don Ramon took St. Denis and his French companions into comfortable custody and waited for Mexico City to decide what to do, the charming cavalier, who entertained his hosts at dinner with scintillating puns in Spanish, courted the seventeen-year-old granddaughter of Señor Ramon, Doña Emanuelle, regarded as the greatest beauty in all northern Mexico. It was a confection, a cotton-candy romance—dashing young blade meets fiery Latin beauty among the soft earth colors of adobeland. St. Denis won Emanuelle's heart and Don Ramon's interest in his proposed trade before being summoned to Mexico City where he met his stern inquisitors in June.

The gallant was as witty and winning as usual. He did not know he had broken any rules; he had only come to help the missionaries, whose religion they all shared. Then, too, he had lost his heart to a Spanish girl. It was as good as if he had become Spanish himself. Viceroy Linares bit. Would the Frenchman then personally lead a Spanish occupation force into the east Texas of Hidalgo's hope, since he had such a renowned reputation as a friend of the Indians? St. Denis would, and he did, but not before secretly informing Governor Cadillac of his plans and giving time for Natchitoches to be fortified. He also stopped first in San Juan Bautista to marry his beloved in a frontier gala that warmed the winter of 1715. Then he shepherded a recolonizing and remissionizing party led by members of the Ramon family into a Los Adaes settlement only a coin's throw from his own Natchitoches, where goods could be got for the right amount of silver.

St. Denis had left his pregnant wife in San Juan Bautista, and he now returned to Mobile and amassed 100,000 *livres'* worth of goods, which he brought back to Natchitoches, trading them with the Indians and Spaniards, and trying to smuggle some on to his new in-laws. But he was caught. Envy was as much a condition of southwest frontier life as it was in Madrid and Paris. The governor of Coahuila and Texas, Alarcón, squealed, and once again St. Denis was packed off to a Mexico City jail for violating the trade laws. But again the brazen-tongued cavalier had his answer ready. No, he wasn't smuggling anything, merely bringing thirteen mules (that is all the Ramons admitted to receiving) with his own personal belongings, including some brocade for his wife, who was expecting and was, of course, Spanish. Somehow the rascal managed to escape the calaboose and head north again. The Spanish would never again have a chance to let the glib gallant slip through their fingers. This time he took his wife to New Orleans, just before the outbreak of the War of the Quadruple Alliance, which pitted Spain against France on the Continent and, when word crossed the Atlantic, in North America, too.

On the Gulf Coast the French struck first, taking Pensacola; then the Spanish took it back; then France was the winner again with St. Denis and his Indian allies the decisive factor—all this within two months' time. It was a gentleman's war, victors and vanquished exchanging courtly compliments and sharing their stores of fine spirits. To the

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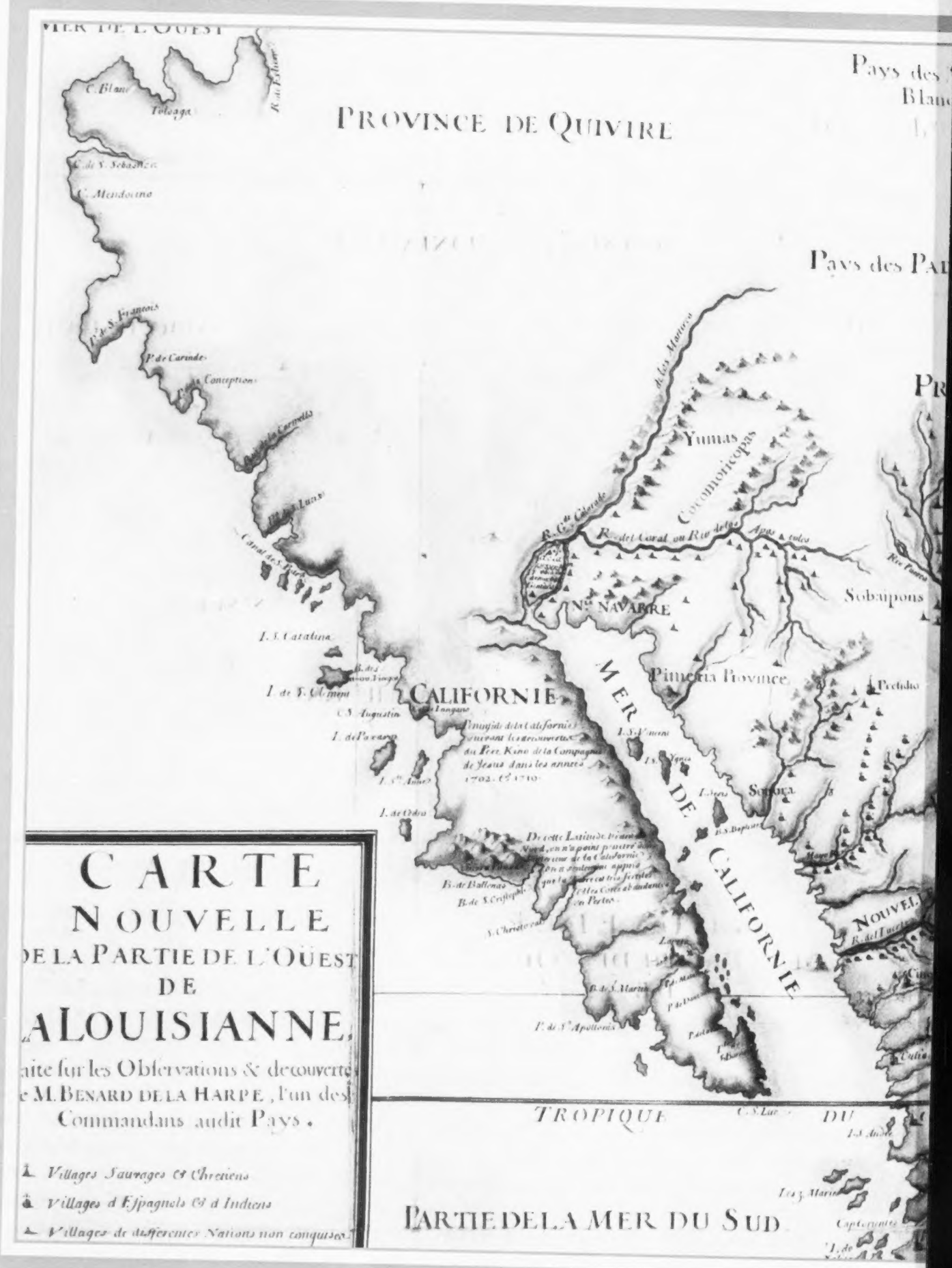
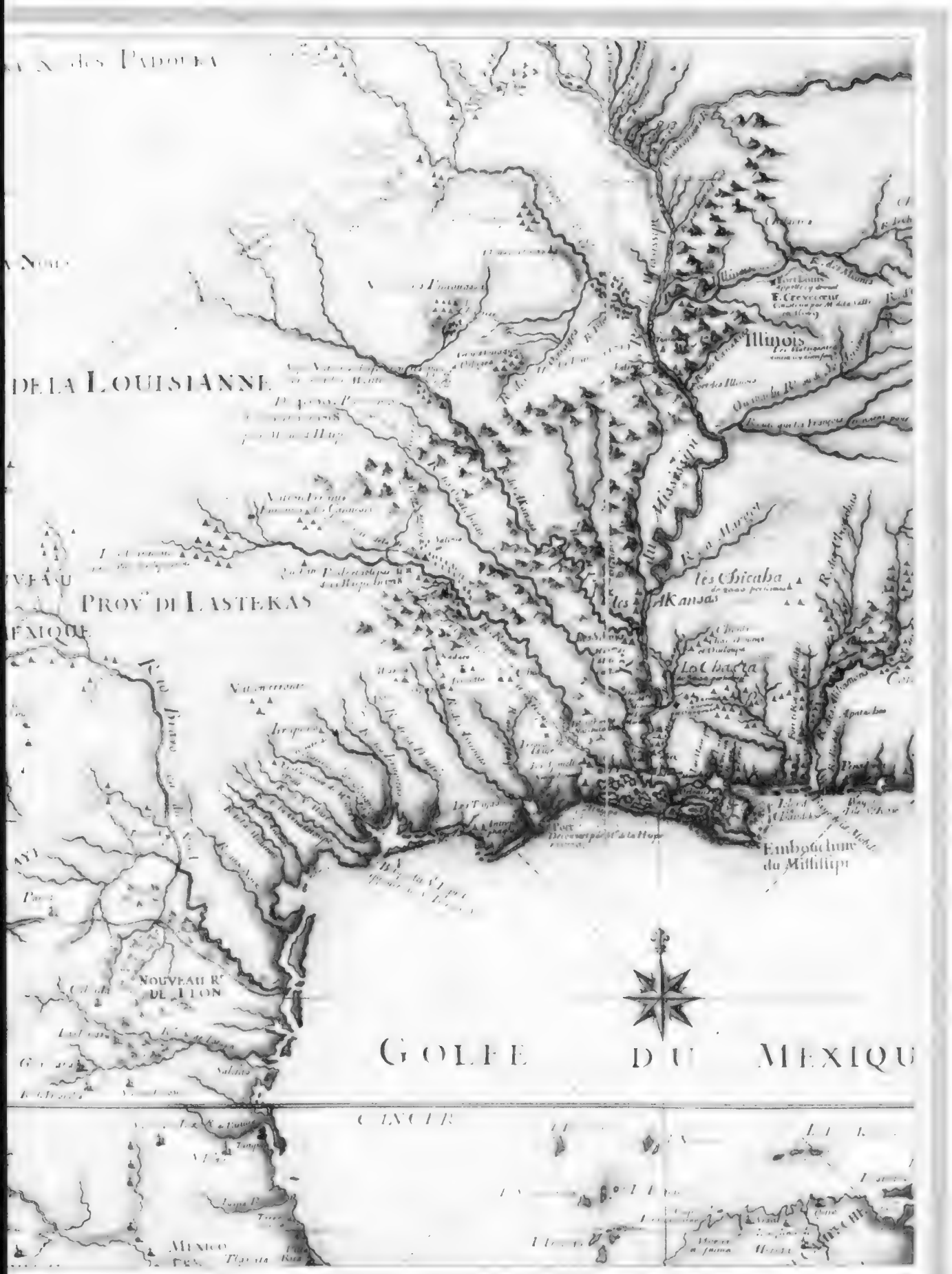
*This article is adapted from a chapter in* Shadow of a Continent *by Larry L. Meyer, to be released by the American West Publishing Company on September 15.*




***Jean Baptiste Benard de la Harpe's 1720 map shows western lands extending from the Mississippi to California, most of them claimed by Spain. La Harpe's notations show westward thrusts by several contemporary French explorers (emphasized here by light-colored arrows), including a 1717 overland***




***journey from Natchitoches on the Red River through present-day Texas by trader Louis Juchereau de St. Denis; La Harpe's own 1718 trip up the Red River into Oklahoma; and fur hunter Charles Claude du Tisné's 1719 voyage up the Missouri River and overland to villages of the Osage and Pawnee Indians.***

west, in the Natchitoches country that St. Denis had temporarily left, the war amounted to a comic opera. In June of 1719 a French officer took seven men and marched fifteen miles west to Los Adaes (which St. Denis had helped the Spanish build), capturing its "garrison" of one ragged Spanish soldier and several squawking chickens. The frightened missionaries and settlers raced south to San Antonio, the new mission and town founded in 1718 by Alarcón. Spain was out of east Texas again, and in Paris it was decided to finish the job by commissioning St. Denis to drive Spain south of the Rio Grande. Unhappily for France, the ship carrying St. Denis's orders was captured by Spaniards.

Proud Spain had another wound to lick. Not only had she given up east Texas without firing a shot or drawing a saber, she also suffered a stunning defeat far in the north, at a place that wasn't even on a map. For two decades Spaniards had worried about the spreading French influence among the Indians of the Great Plains, to whom the French had come with trade goods and guns. Concern ran deepest in Santa Fe, where, upon instructions from the viceroy, Governor Valverde decided someone had to go out and reconnoiter French activity. In 1720 he sent Don Pedro Villasur and more than a hundred Spaniards and friendly Indians north over the Sangre de Cristos and onto the unfriendly short-grass flatlands. Villasur was not the man for the job. He went too far, angling up through eastern Colorado and then on to the banks of the northern branch of the Platte River, near the present town of North Platte, Nebraska. Here, through indecision and stupidity, Villasur invited a massacre by French-armed Pawnee warriors that cost New Mexico more than thirty of its non-Indian defense force—a third of the province's finest troops.

The time had come to avenge such indignities. Time for a show of force in the West, which Spain thought of as *her* land. But she acted with typical deliberateness, and that, as usual, cost her. By the time an army of five hundred men was assembled, provisioned, and organized to retake the lost Texas territory, its proud commander, José de Azlor, the Marqués of San Miguel de Aguayo, who was determined to push France back across the Mississippi, received word that peace had been made between Spain and France, on May 16, 1721. Deflated, Aguayo marched on to reoccupy Los Adaes. There he received under a safe-conduct pass the man the Indians called "Big Leg." St. Denis asked if Aguayo meant to respect the peace agreed to by their respective countries, or whether he chose to fight. The marqués, having observed the heavily armed coalition of Indian tribes that St. Denis had put together with his customary skill, chose peace. So the status quo returned to the blurred boundary between the red-earth hill country of Spanish Texas and the reedy swamps of the French Red River Valley.

St. Denis, who had been made commandant of Natchitoches and was to remain in that capacity for another twenty-three years as an immovable barrier to Spanish expansion east, probably welcomed the return of his wife's nation to Los Adaes. He was as much a trader as a French hero, and his best customers were back, short as always of everything he just happened to have in stock.

ANOTHER FRENCHMAN opposed to the hostilities was Jean Baptiste Benard de la Harpe, like St. Denis an officer-explorer who left records. In 1718 he departed New Orleans with the blessing of Bienville and a concession from John Law's company to go up the Red River well beyond Natchitoches and initiate trade with the Spaniards, wherever they might be found. The following year La Harpe built a trading post among the Caddoan Nassonites near what is now Texarkana and sent out the word that he was prepared to pay 5 percent commissions to any Spaniards who would fence for him.

Again, the impotent Spanish authorities were in a rage. Frenchmen were popping up everywhere, and their insolence knew no bounds. Neither did their wanderings. After reminding the Spaniards that Texas really belonged to France by dint of La Salle's colonization there, La Harpe traveled to the Canadian River in modern Oklahoma, befriending Indians as he went and cataloging the flora, fauna, and geological finds in commendable French detail. The War of the Quadruple Alliance and the flight of the Spaniards after the "battle" of Los Adaes dashed La Harpe's hopes for commerce, and in 1721 he was ordered to proceed by sea and take Matagorda Bay (called St. Bernard by the French and Espiritu Santo by the Spanish), where La Salle had made his fateful landfall. La Harpe missed Matagorda Bay and put in at Galveston Bay. Only the year before a Frenchman named Beranger had arrived there to carry off the fairest Indian damsels of the land and leave sickness behind. La Harpe's blandishments gained him nothing. He had no choice but to sail away, back to Louisiana, while Aguayo found the right bay and fortified it.

The resolute La Harpe might be done in Texas, but he was not through in the West. Later in 1721 he took three pirogues laden with trade goods out of New Orleans and headed north to the Arkansas River, up which, he said, he traveled three hundred miles before he lost a third of his stores in striking a reef and had to return. "I did not obtain any advantages from this discovery," he later wrote with regret, "except to have looked over a very beautiful country, prairies covered with oxen and other animals whose skins are valuable. . . ." It was a river worth fortifying, La Harpe advised his countrymen in 1763, when he was an old man and France had just given that river and many others away to the nation that had once blunted his enterprise. Rising in the alpine heights of the southern Rockies, the Arkansas was truly a good river, a worthy river, an important river. But there was another that drained the West even better, one that was even more important.

BY C. W. JEFFERYS; COLLECTION OF MRS. PAUL GLASGOW

*The French foothold in the wilderness attained its zenith on January 1, 1743, when the expedition of the brothers La Vérendrye reached a point within view of the legendary "shining mountains"—the Rockies.*

FATHER JACQUES MARQUETTE, when he first saw the Missouri roaring in from the West in June of 1673 with its cargo of uprooted trees and mud in solution, called it the Pekitanoui. Pierre François de Charlevoix, another Jesuit father who traveled down the Mississippi on a royal inspection trip in 1720, described the Missouri's entrance as the "finest confluence in the world." "The Missouri is by far the most rapid," he wrote, "and seems to enter the Mississippi like a Conqueror, through which it carries its white waters to the opposite shore, without mixing them; afterwards it gives its colour to the Mississippi, which it never loses again, but carries it quite down to the sea."

So forceful and promising a river was irresistible to westering Frenchmen from the first, and they soon began to work their way up it in ones and twos, most of them anonymous adventurers looking for mines and trading for furs. The first official expedition to penetrate the interior of the Missouri country (at least the first of record) was not sent until 1719, when a reappointed Governor Bienville again gave the order. The Illinois Country, that fertile land just east of where the Missouri joined the Mississippi, had only recently been added to the jurisdiction of Louisiana, and the prevailing belief was that the shortest way from there to Santa Fe was up the Big Muddy. Leading the party of trader-diplomats that set out from the settlement of Kaskaskia was Charles Claude du Tisné, a man stamped in the St. Denis mold who had taken over the command of the Natchitoches post when his superior went wooing in Old Mexico. Du Tisné was a gentleman, a Parisian, clever, literate, and blessed with the gift of mirth.

In 1719, du Tisné headed up the Missouri until he met the Osage Indians, with whom he traded. When they heard du Tisné's intention to go farther west and make peace with the Pawnees, the Osage objected. The Pawnees were their enemies, a people they were accustomed to enslaving and trading to the French. Eventually du Tisné managed to get past them, but only on the condition that he take no more than three guns with him. Following the Osage River southwest, du Tisné finally reached a tribe of Pawnees in Oklahoma. Here he bartered away his last three weapons and told his hosts that he was now ready to proceed west to the Comanches, to which the Pawnees gave an emphatic "nothing doing." The Comanches were their most hated foes.

There is a story that the Pawnees first planned to scalp du

*Continued on page 61*

# *The Chevalier Was Here*

## by Larry Zelenak

SUNDAY, February 16, 1913, was a balmy, unseasonably fine day in Fort Pierre, South Dakota. Fourteen-year-old Hattie May Foster was taking a walk with her sister and two of their friends. The girls climbed a hill overlooking Fort Pierre and the Missouri River, where schoolboys had dug trenches and built up earth banks, for use in their "game of war."

Near the boys' fortifications Hattie noticed a piece of metal sticking an inch or two out of the ground. Kicking at the object with the toe of her shoe, she loosened it enough to pull it free from the surrounding gumbo soil. In her hands she beheld a plate of lead, about eight inches long and six inches high, and perhaps one-eighth of an inch thick.

As the girls stood looking at the plate, four boys who had been hunting came up the hill to join them. Fifteen-year-old George O'Reilly took the plate from Hattie and scraped the dirt encrustations off with his knife. There were inscriptions on both sides, but in a language or languages which none of the young people could identify.

"It isn't anything but a piece of lead," George declared. "I'll take it to the hardware store and sell it for about five cents."

But one of the girls, Martha Burns, had a very different idea of the plate's true identity. "It is the stone Moses wrote the Ten Commandments on," she claimed.

George's view prevailed, and, taking the plate, he left to milk his family's cows. Concluding that a nickel would not adequately recompense him for carrying the heavy plate into town, he was about to throw it away when he met George Olson, a high school boy, who asked to see the object. Olson though the plate might be valuable, and advised George to take it home with him.

George gave the plate to his father, who showed it to several friends. The question of his identity soon became the leading topic of discussion in Fort Pierre. Several people realized that the carefully stamped inscription on one side was in Latin, and that the crude knife marks on the other side were in French, but no one in the small community could decipher the plate.

The townspeople telephoned news of the discovery across the Missouri to Pierre, the state capital, in the hope that someone there might be able to ascertain the plate's true identity. That hope was not disappointed.

The Latin inscription was soon translated by historians at the state museum:

*In the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Louis XV, the most illustrious Lord, the Lord Marquis of Beauharnois being Viceroy, 1741, Peter Gaultier de la Vérendrye placed this.*

But the rough knife markings on the other side of the plate posed a more difficult problem, because the scratchings, which had apparently been made in haste, contained several ambiguous abbreviations. At any rate, the gist of the inscription went something like this:

*Placed by the Chevalier de la Vérendrye / Louis-Joseph Vérendrye / Louis La Londette / A Miotte / The 30th March 1743*

WHO WERE THE MEN who buried this plate? Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye was born in Canada in 1685, the son of a minor government official. In 1730, after a lengthy service in the French army, he obtained permission to pursue his life's ambition—the discovery of the "Western Sea," which supposedly opened out into the Pacific Ocean.

But with this royal permission came no government support, except for a monopoly on the fur trade in the regions northwest of the Great Lakes. In theory, the fur trade was supposed to cover the costs of the exploration; in practice, the fur trade often couldn't even pay for itself—and that meant no time or funds for exploring. When Pierre had still undertaken no journeys of discovery by 1737, Jean Frederic Maurepas, the French minister of the interior, felt free to express to the Marquis of Beauharnois, the governor of Canada, his suspicion that "the beaver trade had more to do than anything else with the Sieur de la Vérendrye's western expedition."

From his headquarters at Fort La Reine, near Lake of the

*Continued on page 61*



***Discovered in 1913 by a girl near Fort Pierre, South Dakota, this lead tablet (both sides are shown) confirmed the presence of French explorers in the West in 1743.***

SOUTH DAKOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNO XXVI REGNI LVDOVICI XV PROREGE
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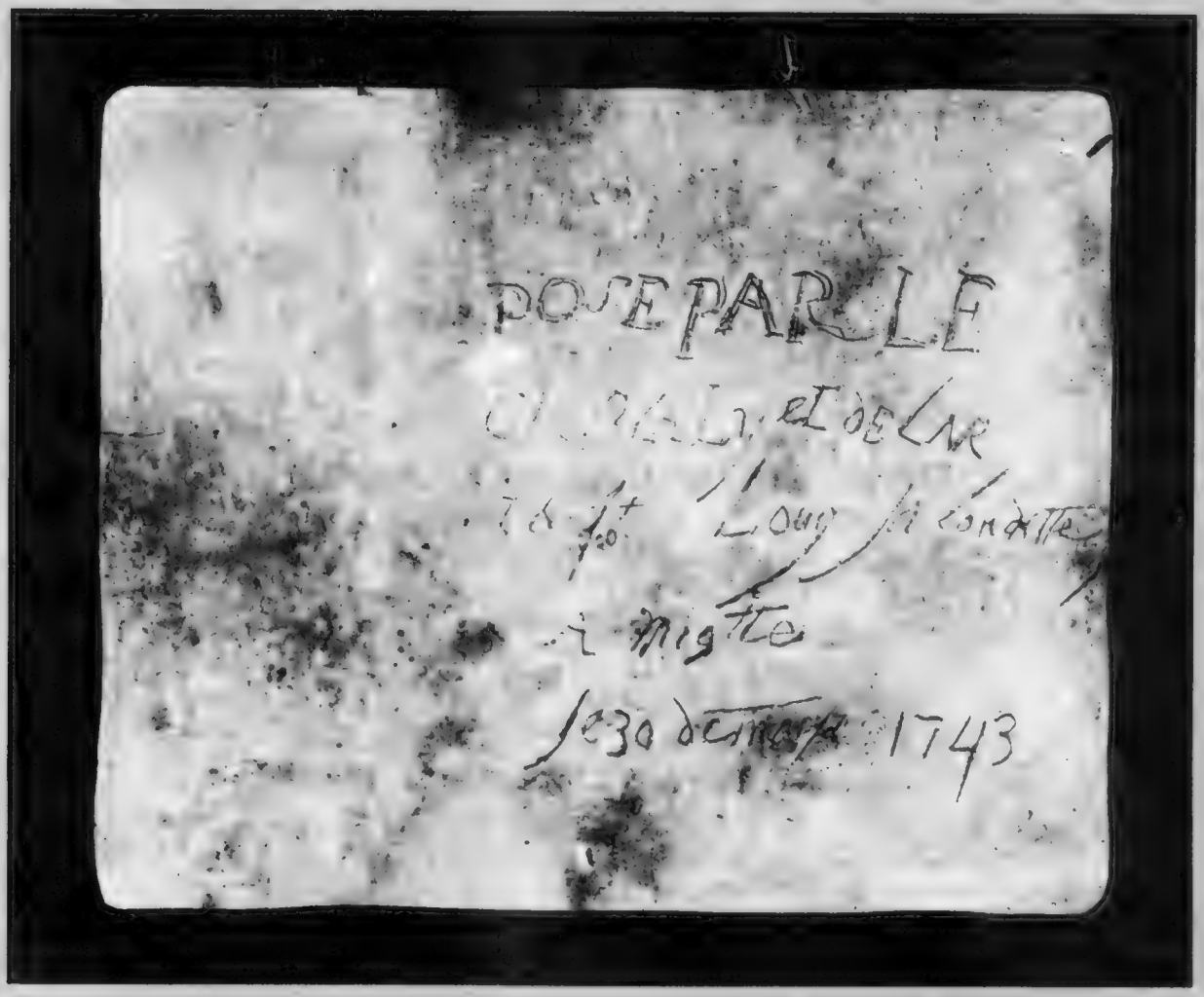

*Government agent Alice Fletcher confers with her field party during a survey of Nez Perce lands in about 1889.*

# Indians Called Her "The Measuring Woman"

## *Alice Fletcher and the Apportionment of Reservation Lands*

### by Ruth Carson

WITH BLACK BONNET securely fastened, wearing modishly long skirts, and armed with burgeoning field notes, a small, middle-aged New England woman directed the surveying and allotment of lands for the Omaha, Winnebago, and Nez Perce Indians during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Surveyors' chains and transits, jolting rides in spring wagons, and discomforts of camp living—all became an accepted part of life for Alice Cunningham Fletcher. Indians, marveling at her stamina and dedication, called her "the Measuring Woman."

Alice Fletcher was born on March 15, 1838, to affluent parents who were at the time visiting Havana, Cuba, on a trip made for her father's health. Later, in the years following her father's death, a stern stepfather forbade the young girl to read any fiction save that of Charles Dickens, a direction that perhaps explains Alice's lifelong humanitarian interest. As an adult, during the late 1870s and 1880s, Alice was caught up in a growing concern on the part of some Americans for Indian welfare. In his transformation from villain to folk hero, the Indian was already becoming "a much deserved thorn in the American flesh." Contributing to such changing attitudes—and to Alice's resolve—were two books written by Helen Hunt Jackson: her carefully documented *Century of Dishonor* and the novel *Ramona.*

Alice Fletcher's dream—"to meet the Central Plains Indians in their own lodges"—was fulfilled during an extended visit to Nebraska in 1881. Arriving at the Union Pacific railroad station in Omaha, she was welcomed by frontiersman-journalist Thomas Henry Tibbles and Susette La Flesche (a daughter of Omaha chief Iron Eyes, she was also known as Bright Eyes)—both of whom Alice had met two years earlier in Boston during one of their lecture tours on behalf of Indian rights. In her purse she carried letters of introduction from the secretaries of the interior and war, the U.S. postmaster general, and the director of Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

Neither drenching rains nor mud dampened the spirit of Alice Fletcher as the trio journeyed north and west with Indian escorts to the Rosebud Sioux Agency and the camps of the Omahas, Winnebagos, and Poncas. Her friendship

with Bright Eyes, the young Indian woman with whom she shared a buffalo robe at night, was to be lifelong. In 1882 Alice's two traveling companions married, widening their lecture circuit to England and Scotland, and for many years thereafter they contributed important writings on behalf of Indian rights to newspapers and magazines.

Asked by the Omahas, "Why are you here?" Alice Fletcher replied simply, "I came to learn, if you will let me, your tribal organization, your ways, your songs . . . and to see if I can help you in any way." They asked if she could get them a "strong paper" from the Great Father in Washington, securing their land so they might not be driven from it to "Indian Territory" as had the Poncas. Their plea became her crusade: "I felt I had found the work which the Creator had intended me to do."

The Indian women delighted her with their gifts—wooden bowls, horn spoons, sinew for thread. She learned the imperative of accepting Indian food and hospitality, and to appreciate the Indian's music and his reverence for the pervasive spirit of life which he found in earth and sky and all living creatures. Alice Fletcher's name would eventually become legend among anthropologists, yet it was her honest friendliness, rather than her scientific approach, which was to make her so successful in that field.

Back in Washington, D.C., and working on the Indians' behalf through contacts with influential personal and political friends, Alice was able to help implement the drafting and passage of the Dawes Severalty Act of 1882, which granted apportionment of Omaha tribal lands among tribal members, "insuring both their land and future citizenship rights." Surplus land would be sold to the government for what was believed the benefit of the tribe, financing the purchase of seed, livestock, and farm machinery.

Alice Fletcher returned to the Omahas on government assignment in the spring of 1883. Her assistant, Francis La Flesche, a young clerk from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was a brother to Susette La Flesche and to Dr. Susan La Flesche, first native-American woman physician. Twenty years Alice's junior, Francis became like a son to her. The two subsequently collaborated on numerous Indian studies. La Flesche received a law degree in 1893, and later transferred to the staff of the Smithsonian Institution.

During the two years following her return to Nebraska, Alice supervised the allotment of 76,000 acres of land to approximately twelve hundred Indians. During this period she also suffered a severe attack of rheumatic fever which left her permanently lame, a circumstance which led to her deep involvement in the study of Indian music. Devoted Omahas and Pawnees visited the buffalo-skin tent of the ailing administrator and taught her the words and music of their songs. Patiently transcribing data by hand, she gathered material for a notable monograph on native Plains music and its roles in Indian religion, social life, and personal experience.

Alice was also privileged to witness ceremonial rites previously seen by few—or no—other nonwhites. Indian friends gave her priceless artifacts, many of which are found today in Harvard's Peabody Museum. In part due to her influence, American archaeologists turned their major attention from the Classical and Old worlds to the New World.

In 1884 Alice Fletcher was designated by the government to prepare an Indian Bureau exhibit for the New Orleans Exposition. The following year she was asked to present a progress report to the U.S. Senate on "Indian Education and Civilization." In 1886 she became a staff member of the Peabody Museum, directed by Professor F. W. Putnam, her "godfather in science." The same year she was sent by the Department of the Interior to Alaska and the Aleutian Islands to survey native needs there.

Acting under the second Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, Miss Fletcher examined and recorded nearly a thousand land tracts among the Winnebago Indians—a mission concluded in April of 1889. But her most demanding assignment still lay before her, to the west, among Chief Joseph's Nez Perce tribe in Idaho.

DURING THE LAST WEEK of May, 1889, Alice Fletcher and a long-time New England friend, Jane Gay, boarded a Northern Pacific train at Spokane, Washington, for Uniontown on the rolling, bunch-grass Palouse prairie. Setting out on the second leg of their journey the following morning, in a stage drawn by four stout horses, the two women crossed into Idaho and onto a hilltop overlooking the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake rivers, two thousand feet below. A winding, uncertain wagon road led down to the valley, where they were ferried across the Clearwater to "the little sunburnt town of Lewiston."

The *Lewiston Teller* took note of the government administrator's arrival—"Miss Alice Fletcher of Washington, D.C., arrived on Tuesday for the purpose of making allotments of land in severalty to the Indians of this reservation. . . . She is reported to be an efficient agent for that business."

No mention was made of Jane Gay. Calling herself "the cook," her one wish was "to spare her friend as many of the daily chores of an arduous mission as possible." Even smaller in stature than Alice Fletcher and nearly sixty years of age, Jane Gay's buoyant spirit and her added roles as photographer and correspondent were invaluable to that mission.

The two women found the Nez Perce an impoverished remnant of a once-proud nation, recently returned from hated "Indian Territory" in Oklahoma. Three government commissioners had recently made their unwelcome appearance, waiting to negotiate for unallotted reservation land. White settlers, too, were waiting to pounce upon it. Ten thousand cattle belonging to white ranchers already grazed Nez Perce grasslands.

While the new agent conferred with those officially con-

*Alice Fletcher and her assistant, James Stuart (left), pose with Chief Joseph during a cordial meeting in 1890. But the proud Nez Perce leader, denied his ancestral lands, would not accept title to other property offered him.*

cerned, her companion searched Lewiston for necessities, including a camp stove, collapsible bedstead, oil lamp, and cast-iron farina pot. The subsequent trip to the Lapwai Indian Agency center was not an easy one, its steeper ascents demanding that the women dismount and walk. Upon arrival, there was no handshaking between the visitors and the generally cordial Nez Perce leaders. Neither they nor the Indian agent viewed the Dawes Act in the same light in which it was viewed in Washington, D.C., or among the Plains tribes.

Miss Fletcher was delighted to find a New Englander, Vermont-born Edson Briggs, assigned as her chief surveyor. Briggs was a big, genial man, familiar with the area. James Stuart, son of a Montana pioneer father and a Nez Perce mother, would be a reliable and resourceful assistant, interpreter, and driver.

Two days of additional travel brought the company to rain-refreshed Kamiah in the Clearwater Valley, and to the clapboard cabin of Miss Sue McBeth, a Presbyterian missionary. Bags of unbleached muslin, holding sugar, flour, tea, and dried fruit hung from the cabin walls. The friendship of Sue McBeth and her sister, Kate, would mean much to Alice Fletcher and Jane Gay during the next four years.

A weathered frame church stood nearby. From its belfry, curiously resting upon the ground, a bell called Christian Indians to the service and to hear the lady newcomer explain a plan of land allotment leading to U.S. citizenship.

Kamiah became headquarters for Edson Briggs and his crew—a small group of linemen and several Nez Perce helpers who chose to work without dismounting when possible.

Indians who asked for allotments were harassed by others who did not, yet Alice Fletcher's friendly, stubborn kindness won new families to her project throughout the first summer. She left Kamiah in September, riding in cold rain and wet snow across Camas Prairie to Lapwai, finding some of the Indians there openly hostile. When a medicine man failed to "kill" the woman agent "with his eyes," his followers credited the lady with stronger medicine!

Returning to Lapwai in April of the following year, the Measuring Woman was dismayed to find that the Indian agent, resentful of her authority, had failed to provide for her coming. Stores of supplies had been deliberately broken into and scattered. "Nevertheless," Jane Gay wrote back to Boston, "My Lady sits at her board table (beneath its spread umbrella) like a queen on her throne . . . pen in hand, writing her decrees, resolute, unmoved under abuse . . . believing implicitly in the worth of what she is doing."

While she was at Lapwai, the revered Chief Joseph journeyed from the Colville Agency in northeastern Washington at Alice's repeated urging. But this dignified man, who once called the land between the Cascades and the Bitterroot Mountains his home, again chose to remain landless, if he could not have his rightful, green Wallowa Valley.

During their return to Lapwai in the spring, plans for remodeling the little Kamiah church had been much in Alice Fletcher's and Jane Gay's thoughts. The preceding autumn they had learned of an offer of generous financial assistance from a girlhood friend, Mary Copley Thaw. Faithful Nez Perce had agreed to split new cedar shakes for the roof, haul logs over the snow for a new foundation, and bring needed lumber from Mount Idaho. After twenty years of use the building had settled to one side and leaked rain and snow; its floor was splintered, and the interior was drab.

The women brought with them a new red carpet, kegs of nails and paint, glass panes and putty, rolls of wallpaper, and tools. Temperature readings climbed to 110 degrees in the shade during the summer months as work on the church progressed. Nez Perce onlookers laughed to see the bulky Briggs press himself under the structure to inspect its foundation. Gradually the small crew of workers was joined by others, plates of gingersnaps offering an added incentive. It was James Stuart who rebuilt the belfry crowning the trim gray church which today still stands beside U.S. Highway 12 between Kamiah and Kooskia—the oldest continuously-used Protestant church in Idaho.

Allotment work continued, taking Alice Fletcher and her staff to the limits of the reservation. Each night the two women would carefully "shake out their blankets, lest some rattlesnake hide therein." Often they were up by 3:00 A.M. in order to work and travel while it was still cool. The surveying party uncovered colossal errors in former army survey records, some of them obviously "recorded" from an office chair. Other records failed to conform to treaty terms.

Two more years were required for Alice Fletcher to complete the Nez Perce allotments, totaling twenty-two actual months in the field. A treasured parting gift from the tribe was the ceremonial pipe passed among its leaders at the time of the last uprising in 1877. The Measuring Woman had endeared herself to nearly everyone.

Fourteen years after her departure, Nez Perce faith in Alice Fletcher had still not dimmed. The people continued to ask Kate McBeth, "Is the Measuring Woman still in Washington? . . . Could she go to the Office for us?

Mary Copley Thaw had endowed a life fellowship for her friend at the Harvard museum in 1891, and for another quarter-century the institution's reports featured Alice Fletcher's Indian studies. One of these, "Love Songs Among the Omaha Indians," she presented to the Anthropological Congress in 1893, held during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In 1896 she was made vice-president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Her 1904 study, "The Hako: A Pawnee Ceremony," was for many years the only record of a major Central Plains Indian ceremony complete with musical notations. Of all her works, best known today is the monograph "The Omaha Tribe," written with Francis La Flesche.

Alice Fletcher's declining years were spent in Washington, D.C., where she died at the age of eighty-five on April 6, 1923. Her concern for the Central Plains and Nez Perce Indians spanned nearly half a century, more than three years of that time spent on foot or on a jolting wagon seat.

ALICE FLETCHER'S commitment to her mission makes even more tragic the irony that her work was, in part, a disservice to the Indian families she sought to help. In spite of amendments in 1891, 1906, and 1910, the Allotment Act of 1887 proved a failure in getting the American Indian to become a successful farmer, nor did it really better his condition. The white man's version of security and ownership of property were gifts most Indians could not at that time appreciate. Natural communists, in the true meaning of the word, they held a deep reverence for their Mother Earth and were slow to comprehend the buying and selling of land by means of a piece of paper.

According to the provisions of the Dawes Act, the Indian was given a twenty-five-year trust ownership—after which he was granted patent ownership—of land taken from him in the first place. Heads of families could select 160 acres for themselves and forty acres for each minor child. Each unmarried person over eighteen years of age, and each orphan, was entitled to eighty acres. Should the land be suitable only for grazing, the acreage was doubled. After twenty-five years the Indians might sell their land.

Subdivided into ever smaller and more scattered plots as heirs multiplied, and leased or sold to whites for pitifully small sums, the resulting checkerboard reservations were weaker than under original tribal treaties. The sale of surplus land usually brought only short-lived prosperity. Meanwhile, native plant foods and game were steadily decreasing in quantity. Many of the allotted tracts could not even support small, diversified farms, as they often lacked a water source.

By 1934 Indians had lost ninety million acres through land sales, many of them through fraudulent transactions. Unfortunately, both church and government had encouraged small-acreage ownership and the sale of lands, hoping to turn the Indian from his tribal-oriented culture to rural, white patterns of living.

Seven years after the death of Alice Fletcher, anthropologist Margaret Mead spent a summer with the Omahas, finding social and economic near-chaos, "in part, the result of the benevolent efforts of a well-intentioned lady of missionary leanings." Present, she found, was a deep need for restoration of the tribal structure which the Dawes Act had helped to displace, thereby "protecting the Indian from further injustice"—a sentiment which, given the perspective of time, Alice Fletcher would doubtlessly have endorsed.

**Ruth Carson** *of Pullman, Washington, is a former college biology teacher and a free-lance writer in the fields of natural science and history. Her articles have appeared in a number of regional and historical publications.*

# Visions of the Past

## *The Unique Photography of Art Gore*

*Those paintings and photographs that most deeply touch the heart and mind of the viewer are in turn as much an outpouring of the heart and mind of their creator as they are products of his technique. In the paragraphs below, photographer Art Gore, widely recognized for his warmly nostalgic re-creations of American memories, shares something of the personal philosophy that is expressed so well through his pictures, a selection of which appears on the following pages.*

YOU DON'T have to travel far in search of beauty. It is at every turn of the road, in every leaf that crisps under your naked feet. It is in the call of a locust embedded in the tall, frightening pines, and in the start you get when a lizard fleets across your path; it is in the dark, curdling pools of the creek, iridescent in the evening light; in the smell of a pine cone or the call of the whippoorwill. It is when you make yourself dizzy as you walk along a familiar path at night looking up at a starry sky, somehow knowing that among all those millions of lights, you also are being observed from afar.

Because I grew up with them, old things fascinate me: an ice cream churn, an apple peeler, beautiful marbled pots and pans. I sometimes wonder about the faces and personalities of the people who owned these treasures that I collect today for still lifes. What has become of them? Is this all there is left to show for a human life? I am driven to do studies of these things, these memories that come whispering back to life from out of my past.

I love to browse through antique shops, sniffing the musty air and hunting for the discarded relic that the dealer will sell for a buck when it is worth a fortune to me because of its exquisite shape or coloring, the scrapes, dents, and rusty spots that only time can bestow.

Sometimes I buy an old pitcher, lantern, pot, or other kitchen item, and it stays around the studio for months before I go back to it. For example, I've had a stereoscope for a year, tried a couple of studies with it, but tossed them out. I just haven't let that particular subject ferment in my mind long enough. It's almost as if I have to move through time and engage the freshness of that memory. Then all of the pieces fall into place. When I feel real excitement at seeing the finished work, I know that it is right.

Many people comment that my work is sad and haunting. Others say it is steeped in religious overtones, though I don't see it that way. I would call myself a chronicler of my own memories and experiences. But it goes even deeper than that. What you see on the surface may be only an onion, or cattails shedding their "parachutes," but what I really want you to see is the divine plan behind it all. Perhaps you didn't make ice cream in an old churn or have a creek an hour's walk away. Maybe you see nothing in the way the wind plants new dandelion seeds, or in the thought it took to invent such a plan for sowing. I yearn for you to refresh your own perspective on the beauty of the world, to look at the whole apple before you bite into it. I want you to acknowledge that each of us is endowed with the gift of life and that, for all its brevity and pain, it is truly a gift.

Today memories and heritage are being rediscovered. People everywhere realize that something rare and dear to them is being lost forever, and they want to reclaim some wisp of those precious years soon to be obliterated. Simplicity, too, we crave—the beauty of a sunset, still beautiful beyond the clutter we have spread over this natural garden that we occupy. Somehow, it is the duty of the poet, the artist, the musician to preserve for us the remaining fragments of the lives of our pioneer ancestors and to recall and reshape this legacy for our computer-age senses.

One cannot paint the sound of a train moaning in the night or rain whispering on autumn leaves, the pungent odor of sugarcane being squeezed into syrup, the glimmer of fireflies in the night, or the awesome trail of a falling star. The artist, in his own individual way, is a town crier proclaiming that beauty is everywhere and that we of all creatures are endowed with thought, memory, speech, and love to understand this earth.

**Art Gore** *is a free-lance photographer in Denver, Colorado.*

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*The photographs on the following pages will appear in* Images of Yesterday *by Art Gore, to be released by the American West Publishing Company on September 1.*

THE SURRY

THE MILKING STOOL

BREAD 'N' HONEY

CONCORD GRAPES

THE OLD STONE BRIDGE

RESURRECTION

# Edward Rosewater's Fourth of July

*The National Centennial was fast approaching. Where, the newspaper editor asked, was the old-time patriotic fervor?*

by Dorothy Devereux Dustin

DURING THE MONTH of June, 1875, all three newspapers in the twenty-one-year-old city of Omaha in the eight-year-old state of Nebraska complained about a distressing condition: the Fourth of July had not been suitably celebrated for several years, and in spite of the interest engendered by the approaching National Centennial, neither the city council nor any private organizations were making appropriately grandiose plans for the current year.

It was a shame, the editors agreed, that Independence Day had become almost solely the province of small boys endlessly exploding firecrackers and politicians endlessly spouting platitudes. Where, the editors asked, was the patriotic fervor which had inspired enthusiastic celebrations when the town was little more than a ferry-landing and a few temporary shacks? Now that Omaha had established itself as Nebraska's leading city, were its twenty thousand citizens too secure, too sophisticated to celebrate the nation's birhday?

Such rhetoric elicited a few announcements for special entertainment such as hourly concerts by the Union Pacific Band, and a number of the city's twenty-four churches made plans for picnics or suppers. But that seemed to be all.

For one editor those modest plans were totally inadequate. This was Edward Rosewater—immigrant from Bohemia, former telegrapher for General Fremont in West Virginia, for General Pope in Virginia, and for Western Union in Omaha; member of Nebraska's legislature; and founder and editor of Omaha's most popular newspaper, the four-year-old *Daily Bee*. For this unashamedly patriotic American, something more was needed.

Forthwith he provided something more.

On June 20, the *Bee* announced its plans for a ninety-ninth National Birthday Celebration to be held on Saturday the third. The list of events to be sponsored by the *Bee* filled half a column: horse races, both running and trotting; a mule race, with the last mule in to receive $10.00; pigeon-shooting matches; foot races, sack races, and hurdle races; a greased-pig chase and a greased-pole climb; music and dancing.

And the main attraction—a balloon ascension.

"Up In A Balloon, Boys" read the first announcement. But not just up. Edward Rosewater's balloon was "Ho! For the Black Hills. Harney's Peak or Bust." With the help of a compass, a barometer, and the prevailing winds, the balloon would pass over four hundred miles of sparsely settled lands to the just-discovered goldfields in Dakota Territory, avoiding "any interruption from Phil Sheridan's mountain howitzers" which were still making feeble efforts to keep white intruders out of Indian treaty lands.

The pilot of the aerial vessel would be John H. Pierce, now a stencil cutter and correspondent for the *Bee*, but formerly a famous aeronaut. The navigator would be Edward Rosewater's brother Andrew, former Omaha city engineer. They would have as a passenger the lovely and charming wife of the aeronaut.

The *Bee* allotted two full columns to a biography of J. H. Pierce, an extremely versatile man apparently, whose career had included many years as a circus acrobat, twenty-one balloon ascensions in the East, and, just the year before in Omaha, a tightrope walk between one three-story building (Rogers' Hardware) and one five-story building (the Grand Central Hotel), a feat which he had accomplished almost in its entirety before the disparate heights forced him to back up—or rather, down.

Two days after the *Bee*'s announcement, there commenced a journalistic war typical of the politically chaotic years following the Civil War.

The aggressor in this case was a rival newspaper, the *Republican*. Established in 1858 when the party it championed was a struggling novice of four years, it had seen that party become the dominant and domineering force in American politics. Under the madcap editorship of a transplanted Minnesota man with the imposing name of Saint Honore Durand Balcombe, it had become the fanatical defender of Radical Reconstruction.

Its victim, the *Bee,* was also avowedly Republican in politics, but an outspoken critic of the radical, vocal minority of the party.

A delighted spectator to this infighting was Dr. George Miller's *Herald*. A staunch Democrat, Miller had seen his beloved "great conservative party" decline from near-omnipotence to near-demise.

The *Republican* began its campaign with a frontal attack on the balloon itself, opining that it was no doubt "as rotten as the concern that sends it to the Black Hills." Shortly thereafter, moving with a speed modern-day investigative reporters would have been proud of, and in language markedly similar to modern-day advocacy journalism, the *Republican* announced victoriously that the whole thing was indeed a rotten farce. Edward Rosewater's balloon, far from being an expensive, up-to-date vessel, was instead an old one which he had obtained for $7.50 from "a warehouse on the bottoms," where it had been abandoned three years previously by the great aeronaut Steiner following his brief but "graceful" ascension from Eleventh and Farnam.

The *Bee's* counterattack was immediate.

Its balloon was a superb balloon, seventy feet high when inflated, 270 pounds in overall weight, capable of carrying twenty thousand cubic feet of gas. It was not rotten. Partially filling it with a "fanning mill" had shown it to be in perfect condition. True, it needed to be re-varnished inside and out, but the *Bee* was completing that task using supplies provided by Dr. Edwards, the Sixteenth Street druggist. True, the original netting and basket were in poor condition, but aeronaut Pierce had just returned from Chicago with one hundred dollars' worth of the best netting money could buy and with a brand-new twenty-dollar basket.

In addition, the *Bee* had now become such an authority on balloon construction that it was making two twenty-foot aerial vessels which would be sent up carrying dogs, cats, and pigs.

Furthermore, the *Bee* would not have to depend on the inferior lifting power of city coal gas. The *Bee* had enlisted the aid of experts to erect a battery to manufacture hydrogen gas: Mr. Pontez, the Union Pacific chemist; Dr. C. F. Goodman, prominent drug wholesaler; and last but not least, Dr. Wise's nationally famous treatise on the subject. The equipment and supplies would cost the *Bee* three hundred dollars.

Temporarily repelled, the *Republican* suggested an alternative method for lifting "Rosey's balloon": simply place the braggart editor in the basket. "There will be so much gas aboard that the effort will not be great. Selah!"

"Rosey" did not bother to dispute his gaseous condition, but the next day the *Herald,* possibly afraid that the war was ending, stirred things up again with a long story about the coming event, complimenting the "enterprising editor."

With an enemy on both flanks, the *Republican* altered its tactics and sallied forth on the economic front. Why, it asked, would anyone spend, or advocate the spending of, so much money on a silly stunt during these frightful times of depression, drought, and grasshopper plagues?

The *Bee* annihilated the attack.

First, it said, the ascension would diminish the antagonism between "the outstate people and the business men of Omaha"; hundreds of farmers, who certainly deserved a little diversion, would come into the city by team or on half-price excursion trains.

Even more important, the *Bee* balloon would be one more step—a pygmy step perhaps, but nevertheless a step—in the advancement of air travel. As proof that air travel was not the impossible dream of a few madmen, the *Bee* printed a long article by Col. C. M. Terrell of the Pay Department Headquarters, Army of the Platte, right there in Omaha.

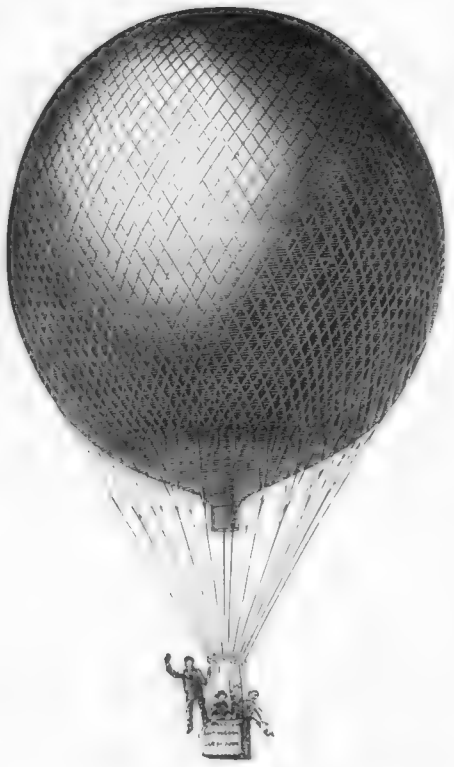
Colonel Terrell's eloquent article chronicled the history of ballooning since 1873, including the most recent experiments in "independent motion." Some day, he predicted, balloons would not have to depend on winds for motive power. He himself was designing a device, something like a small windmill, which aeronauts could turn with one hand for forward propulsion, using the other hand to control a rudder which would determine direction.

The *Republican* appeared to be running out of ammunition; the day after Colonel Terrell's article, only one allusion to the balloon appeared: a two-line offer to take on all bettors that the *Bee* balloon would never make it to the Black Hills.

The *Bee* simultaneously made a two-line offer: to deliver letters to the Black Hills from anyone having friends or relatives there—a revolution in mail delivery. As further evidence of its confidence, it printed a copy of the invitations it had sent to President Grant and to Generals Sheridan and Sherman.

On the night of June 28, another kind of attack was made on Ed Rosewater's balloon. Someone sneaked into the fairgrounds building, and before the guard awoke and gave chase, slashed the balloon in two places. On July 1, the *Bee* reported that the damage from this dastardly act had been successfully repaired, a condition which no doubt greatly displeased "that contemptible outfit," the *Republican*.

On July 2 the *Bee* confidently reported all in readiness. It thanked General Crook and all the other officers and enlisted men who had been donating their time to preparing the battery and the fairgrounds. It printed General Sherman's polite



***Highlighting Omaha's Independence Day celebration would be a gala balloon ascension, courtesy of Edward Rosewater.***

regret, mailed from Headquarters, Army of the United States, in St. Louis, that he was "committed for that day and occasion at Hamilton, Illinois"; but it balanced that disappointment with a story concerning the city's overall enthusiasm as typified by the letter sent to all clerks and route agents of the area post office:

*GENTS—On account of many of our clerks and agents wishing to take transportation for the Black Hills in the* Bee *balloon, this office will be closed on Saturday, July 3rd, 1875.* E. Pluribus Unum.

*Very respectfully,*
*Paul VanDervoort,*
*Chf. Hd. Clerk, R. M. S.*

IT RAINED Friday night, all night. But at dawn, when a reverberating salute from the barracks applauded the arrival of the official holiday, the sun exploded in brilliant metallic yellow above the blue-gray haze of the Iowa Bluffs.

Soon the town was alive with small boys equipped with the best (that is, the noisiest) firecrackers available, and with traditional expertise lighting them in a manner calculated to cause the greatest consternation among the ladies of Omaha.

By ten o'clock, the streets were dry enough for pedestrians. (There were no paved streets in Omaha, the city council's recent experiment with wood planking on Farnam Street having broken up into a million pesky splinters, and the short stretch of macadam on Ninth having sunk into the apparently bottomless pit of the bottomlands.)

The Twenty-Third Infantry Band, the City Band, and the Lincoln Band, the latter having come the sixty miles from the new capital by special train, paraded good-naturedly, dodging mudholes and small boys, and bowing smartly when their patriotic songs were greeted with hurrahs. At noon, the bands began the three-mile march to the fairgrounds, hurrying to beat the citizens who were even then crowding into the flag-bedecked cars of the Omaha Horse Railway Company or the huge buggies of the Omaha Omnibus Line.

Meanwhile, up at the fairgrounds, a small group of people had congregated shortly after dawn: Edward and Andrew Rosewater and, as nearly as can be determined, the whole staff of the *Bee;* Doctors Edwards and Goodman; and aeronaut Pierce.

The launching plan allowed three hours to set up and activate the battery and to fill the gasometer's reservoir, and three hours to complete inflation of the balloon. But to ensure that the balloon would ascend at the announced time of 3:00 P.M., arrangements had been made for plumbers to arrive at a very early hour to put the finishing touches on the complex battery fittings.

While they awaited the arrival of the plumbers (who, it soon turned out, would be delayed), they checked and rechecked the battery—the five immense hogsheads, the tangle of connecting pipes, the shiny gasometer. They carefully wheeled the wagon carrying the limp, gleaming balloon out of the fairgrounds building; they checked and rechecked the containers holding the 5,000 pounds of sulphuric acid, the 5,000 pounds of iron, and the 18,000 pounds of water.

Finally, the plumbers arrived—it was now past nine o'clock—and began their work. Tensions eased. It would not take the plumbers long; the ascension would be only a little late.

Edward Rosewater laid out his gas-making instruction book and checked the plumbers' progress. "Who has the funnel?" he asked. For reasons which shall forever remain a mystery, no plumber there knew anything about the specially ordered, specially fabricated funnel needed for pouring the sulphuric acid.

It was eleven when an improvised funnel was delivered from town. It was shorter and less sturdy than it was supposed to be, but it was a funnel.

The growing crowd of bystanders commented on the lack of progress, wondering if the accusations in the *Republican* had been true. Hurriedly the funnel was inserted into the battery fitting. Hurriedly sulphuric acid was poured in. Hurriedly the pipes were fed to the prostrate balloon. Eureka! The balloon began to stir. It was beginning to fill.

"Funny thing," commented one of the onlookers. "It sounds like water going into the balloon."

It was water.

Too much sulphuric acid in the generator, added too fast.

The pipes were disengaged, the balloon was emptied, and all the available ice at the fairgrounds was used to cool the overheated battery. It was now past noon.

Comments from the crowd were becoming louder. Aeronaut Pierce took it upon himself to explain the difficulties and suggested that the guests trip a few light fantastics at the Floral Hall. In less than an hour, he assured them, the balloon would be full enough to be seen from anywhere on the fairgrounds.

Mrs. Pierce had arrived. She was dressed in the height of fashion—a mauve-colored dress with a lace collar and blue necktie, white kid gloves, and a black hat with a long plume. Her confident attitude did much to dispel the doubts of the guests and the gloom of the hosts.

By about one o'clock, the battery apparatus seemed cool enough to function. Someone had fashioned an extension for the funnel. Edward Rosewater double-checked the instruction book, shouted out the formula amounts; aeronaut Pierce attached the pipes; Andrew Rosewater poured—very, very carefully.

Again the "shapeless, unwieldy" mass which was the balloon stirred.

Almost on tiptoe, the scientists-for-a-day approached it. Gas! Not water, gas! Mrs. Pierce clapped her hands in delight. The nearby greased-pig contest was postponed long enough so that the youthful contestants could take a look.

For perhaps an hour everything went fairly well. The folds of the varnished cloth undulated, bulges formed and grew. Young Scott Jackson, slippery but victorious from his contest with the pig, declared that he could see daylight underneath the rounding mass. By the time young Cliff Redfield had slid back down the greased pole and over to the judges' stand, clutching his two-dollar bill, the thing was indubitably an aerial vessel. By three o'clock it was airborne —creased like an accordion and with a comical palsy—but airborne.

There were, by that time, three thousand people in the fairgrounds. And many of them were close enough to hear the series of ominous rumblings and rattlings that now began to emanate from the battery. With barely concealed frenzy, the Rosewater brothers used a hastily summoned carload of ice to slow things down. Aeronaut Pierce belatedly observed that the gasometer was smaller than the ones he had seen before. The operations of the battery would simply have to be slowed down to the capacity of the reservoir.

Edward Rosewater and his companions made some hasty calculations. Could the ascension be made at all? Should the inflation be continued?

Someone in the crowd overheard. Swiftly the word spread. A couple of dozen of the town toughs, most of whom had gained admittance by climbing the fence, called "fraud" and made threats.

The inflation was continued. But by 4:00 P.M., the balloon was still only one-third full. All the horse races had been completed. Davy Crockett had beat Black Mose in the half-miler for a purse which had grown to four hundred dollars. The last of the trotters had been rubbed down and corralled.

***Passengers in the vessel would be aeronaut John H. Pierce, his lovely wife, and Edward Rosewater's brother, Andrew.***

The director of the sack races had exhausted his supply of contestants. The refreshment stands were nearly sold out.

Edward Rosewater's brown suit was limp with perspiration and spotted with mud. Andrew Rosewater's heavy blue shirt —the one which was to have protected him on his trip to the Black Hills—was barely recognizable as a piece of clothing. The plume on Mrs. Pierce's hat drooped, and the hem of her dress was a disaster. But with her usual ladylike manner, she aided her husband in explaining the difficulties to the crowd.

At 5:00 P.M. aeronaut Pierce was forced to make an announcement: there was not enough gas to support the weight of three persons, but shortly—within an hour he surmised—there would be enough for one. He, J. H. Pierce, would make the trip alone. Even the toughs were impressed.

At seven o'clock, Pierce made his last announcement. It was hardly needed; all who were present could see for themselves that the balloon, still only half full, would not lift the basket when it was empty, much less when it contained a man —or even a dog—or a cat—or a baby pig.

A disturbing number of angry-looking citizens advanced menacingly.

Showman Pierce shouted from the judges' stand. They were not abandoning the ascent. It would take place in the morning. No, it would not be necessary to come back to the fairgrounds. See, Mr. Rosewater was making arrangements to take the whole shebang down into town, into Jefferson Park. The inflation would continue throughout the night and the trip would commence after church services on Sunday.

BOTH PAGES OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY

*The* Omaha Daily Bee*—mobilization headquarters for what became the longest Fourth of July in ninety-nine years.*

WITH HERCULEAN EFFORT, Edward Rosewater and his friends transferred the equipment to wagons. Up and down the rolling hills of the lower bluffs, across and through the deeply rutted streets of the town went the caravan, the balloon tied to a wagon and jouncing madly in the last rays of the sun. It was night when the extraordinary procession reached Jefferson Park.

It was 1 A.M.—perhaps two (everyone had lost track of time by then)—when the fierce winds began, and a few minutes later when the rain started. Soon the low-lying park was a marsh. The battery literally seemed to disintegrate. The balloon swayed, dipped, and ricocheted in the tempest. Totally dejected, weary to his bones, Edward Rosewater was the last to leave the scene of disaster, sloshing and stumbling the half-dozen blocks to the *Bee* office where he would write the story of the destruction of his beloved balloon.

But that story was never printed. Sunday morning revealed a balloon still partially inflated and totally intact.

Frantic efforts to repair the battery were under way when it began to rain again. Throughout the day it rained intermittently. By now it was apparent that the battery was irreparable. Edward Rosewater contacted the Omaha Gas Manufacturing Company. For thirty-five dollars the balloon could be filled with coal gas.

What hydrogen gas remained in the balloon was released. An announcement was made. Aeronaut Pierce would make the ascent, via coal gas, at 10:00 A.M. Monday.

On Monday it rained.

On Tuesday it rained.

On Wednesday, it was hot and sunny.

A crowd of 2,500, including sixty-nine eastern journalists on a tour of the West, gathered in Jefferson Park at noon.

By one o'clock, it was apparent that once again the balloon was going nowhere; moving the poor thing back and forth from the *Bee* office had caused cracks in the varnish.

The eastern journalists snickered; what could you expect of a frontier hick-town. The *Republican* was jubilant. Pierce, it reported, was "the living picture of despair." He looked like a farmer "who had been fighting grasshoppers all summer." Edward Rosewater was indeed sick with chagrin.

Nevertheless, he and his many friends—schoolteachers he had fought for in the legislature; Germans he translated for; some of the boys from the army barracks—made the repairs together. By 6:00 P.M., fifteen thousand cubic feet of city gas had been valved into the balloon.

At 7:30 P.M., aeronaut Pierce announced that all was ready. He stepped into the basket. In a loud voice he directed that the stay-rope be untied.

Slowly the basket rose to a height of two feet.

Quickly it descended with a thump.

Pierce grinned a "ghastly" grin.

He jumped from the basket, detached it, and climbed into the rigging. "Give me a boost, boys," he said, still wearing the ghastly grin. Up went the doughty aeronaut—about three feet. And back down again.

"Wait a little," came the words from the ghastly mask: "Two thousand more cubic feet of gas, and I'll be on my way to the Black Hills."

An hour later, with another boost, Pierce made a vertical ascent—of approximately four feet. Incredibly, he was still grinning. At least that is how some described his expression. A short conference was held: obviously, the full twenty thousand cubic feet of gas would be necessary. To the one hundred or so people still there, another announcement was made: the ascent would be on the morrow.

Thursday, July 8, 1875, was a lovely day. At 4:00 A.M. the inflation was begun again. Soon the balloon was tugging strongly on the stay-rope, and everyone agreed that it would burst with one more ounce of gas.

At 6:00 A.M., aeronaut Pierce announced that all was ready. He stepped into the basket. In a loud voice he directed that the stay-rope be untied.

Slowly the basket rose to a height of four feet.

Quickly it descended with a thump.

Pierce grinned a ghastly grin.

Again he detached the basket and climbed into the rigging; again he received a boost. And the balloon *ascended*. Up, up, until at the unbelievable height of one-half mile, it leveled off and began its long-awaited journey. In the general direction of Iowa.

"Turn her! Turn her!" shouted the crowd, pointing to the northwest and the far-off Black Hills. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief when the balloon veered north, away from the swift, treacherous current and deadly snags in the Missouri.

Meanwhile, up in the rigging, Pierce was aware that he was beginning to lose altitude. Determined to stay aloft at least until out of sight of town, he began jettisoning his clothes —his heavy boots and jacket, "everything but his pantaloons." It helped a little, but aeronaut Pierce was, if nothing else, a realist. To a man standing by the slaughterhouse just north of town, he shouted, "He-e-e-elp!"

Up through the clear air came the bemused reply: "You tink you talkin' to someone stupid? Ich kann nicht do nodding mit you up dere."

Wisely, Pierce turned his attention to his imminent descent. He would need to find a soft landing spot to avoid injury. Nature obliged. About six miles from its starting point, the balloon settled into the middle of Florence Lake. Trapped in the rigging, unable to get hold of the release cord which would expel the last of the gas, the aeronaut was dragged across the surface.

It was amazing how well the balloon fulfilled all the functions of a sail. Taking him right into shore, by George. Right into a dense clump of willows, as a matter of fact. Quickly he extended one powerful leg as a rudder; he missed the willows by a good inch. Then, as the balloon sailed merrily over the mud flats—which meant that Pierce was sliding merrily through them—he squirmed and wriggled until his hand touched the gas-release rope. One more lunge. He had it. He pulled. The balloon, as though loath to cease its unprecedented gamboling, gave "ten or fifteen lively leaps," the last into an arm of the lake, and collapsed.

Sitting in two feet of water, Pierce began to untangle himself. The greatest shock of the day came when he saw a canoe, piloted by two Winnebago Indians, descending upon him. Wordlessly he pantomimed his predicament.

Winnebago Indian Number One turned to Winnebago Indian Number Two. "Do you happen to have a knife with you?" he asked.

The Indians were helping fold the balloon when Edward Rosewater's buggy appeared on a nearby road. They watched Pierce pick his way across the mud flats, watched him clamber into the buggy. They shook their heads and paddled off on more sensible business.

In town, Pierce ate a hearty breakfast. All the *Bee* reporters gathered round as he told of his "daring flight," liberally interjecting superlatives concerning the beautiful sights. The *Bee*'s story, written in a hurry in order to make the evening edition, ended with a glowing description of ponds looking like "sheets of shining silver," and with the muddy old Missouri "like a silver, serpentine streak."

The *Republican*'s follow-up stories were headlined "Fraud, Fizzle, Failure"; and "Recklessness—An Abortion of An Ascent."

The *Herald* commiserated briefly with the bedraggled condition of the aeronaut and praised the persistence of "the little Bohemian editor" who had been responsible for the longest Fourth of July in ninety-nine years.

***Edward Rosewater—immigrant, veteran, legislator, editor, philanthropist, and an unashamedly patriotic American.***

EPILOGUE: Never again did Edward Rosewater try singlehandedly to mobilize a Fourth of July celebration. He did, however, take an active part in National Centennial events in 1876; and for thirty years the *Bee* encouraged all citizens to celebrate the Fourth of July in a manner which would show their appreciation for "this great republic."

Edward Rosewater died in 1906, just a few months before the United States Army Signal Corps, having established a post at the old Infantry Barracks now known as Fort Omaha, constructed a balloon plant which included a $36,000 hydrogen generator. Two years later, the Corps' *Dirigible No. 1* made its first long-distance flight from the fort.

Mr. Rosewater's will had bequeathed a generous sum to the Omaha Public School System. In 1910 his name was commemorated in a new elementary school, a large, handsome brick building on South Thirteenth Street. It stands there still, high on the bluff not far from the Missouri, close to the municipal zoo, the stadium, and two lovely parks. Its inhabitants, old and young, like its old-fashioned, wide hallway adorned with classical pillars; they like its large, high ceilinged, tall-windowed classrooms. And they are immensely proud of "our great philanthropist," Edward Rosewater.

In 1926, Edward Rosewater's son Victor was living in Philadelphia. He was appointed director of publicity for the nation's Sesquicentennial Celebration.

**Dorothy Devereux Dustin** *was for ten years an instructor of English at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. For the last five years she has devoted her time to research and writing, primarily in eastern Nebraska history.*

Augustus William Ericson
1848–1927

# Frontier in Transition:

## *California's Redwood Coast as photographed by A. W. Ericson*

by Peter E. Palmquist

AUGUSTUS WILLIAM ERICSON, an 1866 emigrant from Orebro, Sweden, to the United States, did not come to his adopted land as a photographer. He wished, as did so many other pilgrims, to participate in the rich opportunities that were an important part of the "American Dream." In Ericson's day, this dream was one not only of promised wealth and success, but also of personal fulfillment.

Like other emigrants, Ericson soon found that the United States was not a country paved with gold. The Civil War had just ended. Barely eighteen years of age, he had neither money nor adequate education, and he spoke no English. Trained as an apprentice printer in Sweden, he became in turn a laborer in Chicago, woodsman in Michigan, and millhand, bookkeeper, clerk, telegrapher, and shopkeeper in California. It was during this last period, sometime after 1880, that A. W. Ericson turned his attention to photography in the coastal community of Arcata.

Although it is difficult to identify the precise moment when photography became important to him, Ericson's inquisitive nature and friendship with local portrait studio operators surely served to stimulate and quicken his interest. As yet, no evidence suggests that Ericson became involved in photography during the wet plate era. It may well have been the announcement of the gelatin dry plate process that prompted him to become an amateur practitioner of photography. The skill quickly became a natural extension of his need to express himself.

Ericson's images recall his personal satisfaction at the harnessing of the redwood wilderness into a productive union of settlers and opportunists. He clearly recognized the importance of photography as a permanent documentation of progress. Starting in the burgeoning 1880s and continuing on for nearly forty years, he took photographs throughout the coastal region extending from the Oregon border in the north to Monterey, California, in the south. Humboldt County, located in the northern extremity of this area, was both his home and favorite subject.

During Ericson's active period of photography, opportunities in logging, shipbuilding, mining, and farming drew settlers to Humboldt County in increasing numbers. Towns grew rapidly, and the need for housing and business services expanded to booming proportions. Ericson sought to record each detail. He photographed the felling and milling of giant redwoods, the coming and going of coastal shipping, construction of new homes and businesses, introduction of steam

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*This article is adapted from material in* Fine California Views: The Photographs of A. W. Ericson *by Peter E. Palmquist, just published by Interface California Corporation, Eureka, California,* *© 1975 by Interface California Corporation.*

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An early Ericson logging scene. Ox teams numbering sixteen to twenty animals were a common sight in northern California lumber camps until the mid-1890s. Each pair of oxen, known as a span, could pull a load of more than four thousand pounds, and teams frequently dragged redwood logs weighing up to forty tons out of the woods.

power, groups of schoolchildren, railroads, holiday excursions, agriculture, and the bustle of everyday life. His pictures of the white deerskin dance and other northern California Indian rituals are ranked among the best examples of such photographs in the nation. In later years he recorded the advent of electricity, arrival of the region's first motorcars, and a multitude of changes that resulted from the growth of the twentieth century.

Although his portraits were popular, A. W. Ericson's best work was exhibited in his scenic views. By the 1890s he enjoyed a reputation as the foremost landscape photographer of northern California. Ericson took his photography seriously. He carried his Eastman 8″ x 10″ field camera (a bulky machine with red bellows and brass-mounted lenses) great distances by horse and buggy, often camping on the scene until he obtained the "view" he was after. He was a careful workman and insisted that every aspect of development, printing, and mounting be precisely accomplished. Ericson's images have a straightforward significance; his style remains essentially a documentary record rather than manipulation for artistic content. His views are solid without pretension. Most of them include people, as if he wished to show an essential link between man and his environment as well as to provide scale.

In the decades that followed A. W. Ericson's death in 1927, his reputation in northern California slowly grew. Today he is remembered by local residents of Arcata as "the man who took those old pictures." Such a distinction becomes notable only if one considers that, while nearly 130 professional photographers practiced in the Humboldt County area between 1850 and 1930, only Ericson is uniquely remembered. A few octogenarians also remember Ericson for his gentleman-dandy dress and congenial social manner.

America has had many photographers; only a handful have had the unique sense of destiny that caused them to diligently devote a large portion of their lives to the process of completing a meaningful visual document. Ericson's photographs provide one such insight into history, through their record of the economic and social growth of a western region from nineteenth-century frontier into twentieth-century modernity. His photographs succeed in the same manner as photographs taken by the pioneer wet plate photographers during the geologic and mapping expeditions of the 1860s and 1870s. They communicate the assets and beauty of a land's coming-of-age.

**Peter E. Palmquist** *is staff photographer for Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. During the past five years he has become increasingly involved in the archaeology of photography, with special attention to the work of early northern California photographers.*

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

Arcata, California (above), situated on a wide coastal plain near Humboldt Bay, was the community chosen by A. W. Ericson for his permanent home in the years following his arrival in the far West. Its fine commercial wharf made it an ideal gateway to the redwood country.

Eureka (below), across the bay from Arcata, existed for many years in the shadow of its neighbor but today is the larger of the two cities. With wide, unpaved streets, wooden sidewalks, and false-fronted stores, its early-day appearance was suggestive of a movie set.

COLLECTION OF ROBERT V. BRYAN

COLLECTION OF PETER E. PALMQUIST

In 1892 the Excelsior Redwood Company, which controlled 10,000 acres of California timber, assembled two trainloads of exceptionally large logs for Ericson to photograph (above). This was one of a number of Ericson views exhibited at the Chicago Columbian Exposition the following year.

Shipbuilding was another of the region's industries documented by A. W. Ericson. The barkentine *Jane L. Stanford* (below left) was among the largest vessels built at the Bendickson shipyards on Humboldt Bay, and many dignitaries were present for her gala launching in 1892.

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

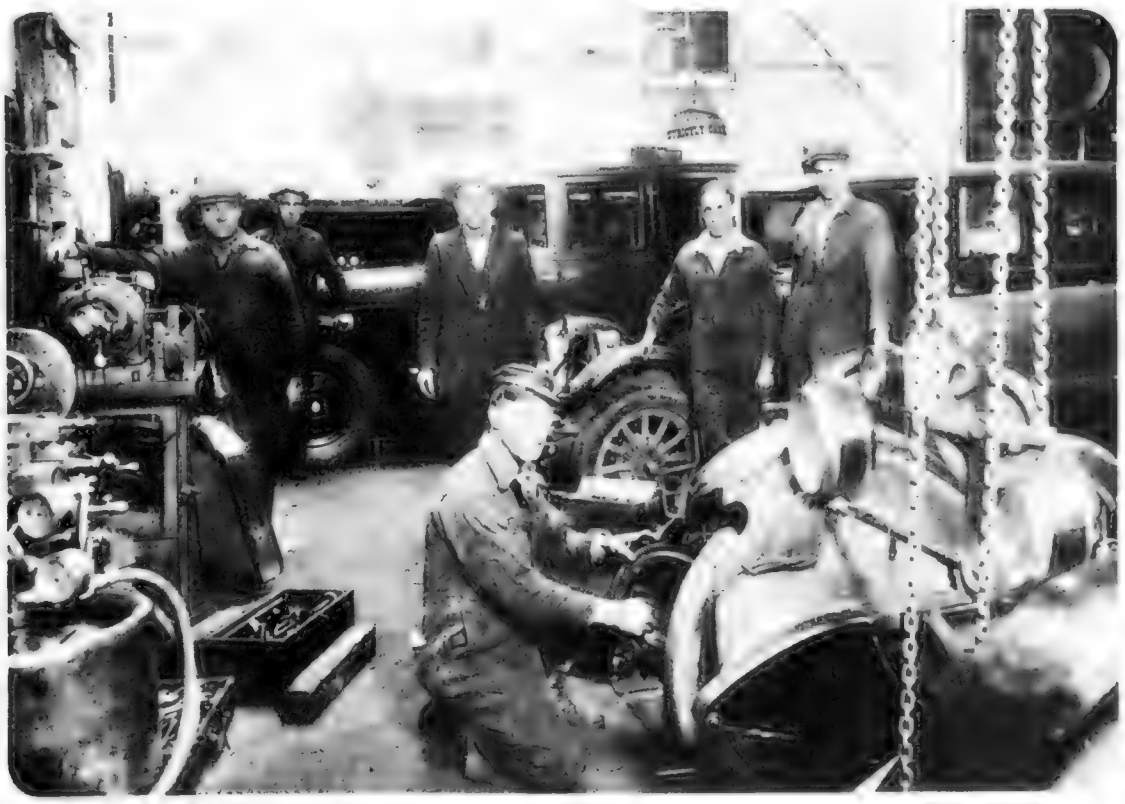
BOTH PAGES: HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

With the passage of time, Ericson turned more and more to people-centered subject matter. In the scene above Mr. J. H. Bloemer, proprietor of the Union Laundry, poses with his crew in front of his premises. Early each morning Bloemer would make his rounds of Arcata for soiled laundry; by evening customers would often have their wash back.

J. C. Bull's butcher shop, shown below, was located next door to Ericson's Arcata photograph gallery and offered the finest in cut meats, bacon, hams, and sausages. The ornate iron framework against the left wall was useful for displaying sides of pork and legs of mutton, for the butcher frequently cut meat to the order of his customers.

Also situated near Ericson's studio was Seely and Titlow's dry goods store, pictured above. A true general merchandise outlet, the shop offered a wide variety of items ranging from canned foods and clothing to seeds and laundry soap. The tracked ladders along either wall were an aid in obtaining items from the tall shelves.

A. W. Ericson's involvement with photography continued through the turn of the century and well into the 1920s; the picture below, showing a well-equipped automobile repair shop, dates from this later era. The pork-pie hatted gentleman at center is P. C. Sacchi, proud owner of the maintenance service and a dealer in "OK" used cars.



This view records an interesting sidelight of redwood logging. Millionaire William Waldorf Astor once made a $25,000 wager with an English gentleman, General Williams, that "he could seat twenty-seven guests around a table made from a single cross section of a great California redwood tree." Astor placed his order with the John Vance Mill and Lumber Company, and a tree was duly selected and cut. It provided a clear section over fifteen feet in diameter and three feet thick. After shipment around Cape Horn in 1897, the polished slab provided a sumptuous base for a dinner party and decided the bet. Unfortunately for Astor, the cost of the table was nearly as great as the amount he won.

COLLECTION OF ASTA CULLBERG

The Isaac Minor quarry was a monument to the dedication of a single man. Minor, nearing the end of his life and wealthy beyond his needs, imported Italian quarrymen to Humboldt County to split and section the huge granite boulder shown above for use in the construction of his mausoleum. To provide transport for the massive blocks of stone from the quarry to the construction site at the cemetery in Arcata, a special railway spur was added to the Arcata and Mad River Railroad. Following completion of the edifice, Minor survived the burial of many of his kin, only to die on a trip outside the area. He is believed to be the only member of his family not buried in the tomb.

BOTH PAGES: HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

The white deerskin dance, above, performed wearing highly prized albino deerskins, was held biennially in September by natives of the Trinity and Klamath rivers. White men's presence was often viewed as a nuisance, and more than once Ericson had to pay a five-dollar fee to take pictures.

Game hunting provided liberal amounts of both food and recreation for early residents of northern California. In the photograph below, Lee Wiley, Rastus Dickerson, Rease Wiley, Walter Wiley, and "Ack" Garcelon pose with their wet dogs and a day's take of ducks.

When the first automobiles made their appearance in Arcata, Ericson was on hand to record these new harbingers of progress. This Buick White Streak of 1908, above, with its powerful engine and sleek lines, undoubtedly provided its owner both with a sense of pride and a sore cranking arm.

Most of Ericson's family appears in the view below, taken on the beach north of Arcata. A. W. Ericson was, as usual, behind the camera, but the familiar signature which appeared on most of his scenic views may be seen in the foreground—a fitting footnote to one man's photographic legacy.

# Where Nature Still Is King

## *In the wild heart of the Rockies, man must bend to a world bigger and stronger than himself*

Text by Donald G. Pike

Photographs by David Muench

STANDING at the center of the north-south sweep of the Rocky Mountains, just astraddle the continental divide on the east and rolling and rising to the western edge of the cordillera, is a land of high mountains capped with eternal snows, and poorly nourished alpine slopes that spread down through dense pine forests dotted with verdant oases of meadow and aspen to broad foothills of scrub oak and mountain mahogany. Here also are small, fertile river valleys standing knee-deep in natural hay, and broad, arid basins that stretch for thousands of square miles in an undulating desert of sagebrush and short grass. This is a region that finds no unity in a similarity of geography, climate, vegetation, or river systems. It pays no homage to the artificial political boundaries of man, gathering its estate from the Rocky Mountains of western Wyoming and eastern Idaho, and reaching to the south to grasp the northeast corner of Utah. It is rendezvous country, finding its unity in the minds and actions of men, bound together in a mood and character that celebrate its past.

In the morning mist that rises from a beaver pond with the first blush of a fall sunrise, rendezvous country evokes the presence of other men and another time. They were men who came to the region in search of furs and found not only a living but a way of life, in a wilderness that taxed their strength, courage, and skill in the most elemental coin possible—survival. They ate from the land, were sheltered and clothed by it, and were accorded the kind of freedom that only wilderness can offer to men who would be their own law. In return the mountain men accepted the land for what it was, taking from it only as another predator, never seeking to make of the land anything the land had not made of itself.

Rendezvous country is a region that has retained its character despite the presence of modern man. It continues to be a land so suited to the life and ethics of another era that the ghosts of the white men who first coursed its streams and rivers still stalk the memories and imaginations of the people who call it home today. The way of the mountain man is yet firmly a part of this region, for most of it remains the province of nature. It is wild land, where man doesn't call the shots but must accommodate himself to a world bigger and stronger than himself.

Towns have risen, even small cities, and ranchers, farmers, and loggers have cut inroads into every part of it, but they all do so with the firm knowledge that they are not undisputed masters of the situation. Any who lack this knowledge run the risk of meeting an abrupt death, or such severe frustration that they depart cursing, not their own lack of perception and skill, but some intangible called bad luck. And they are diminished by their exile, for they not only miss the beauty and drama of this land, but they have failed to learn to measure themselves. They have failed to experience the fulfillment of one who finds in himself the skill and discretion to live with the land as neither master nor slave.

THE PARAMETERS of rendezvous country were laid by the men who came to trade annually at Rocky Mountain fairs. The first, in 1825, was held on Henrys Fork of the Green River; in 1826 and 1831, in Cache Valley, where Bear River makes its great turn around the Wasatch; in 1827 and 1828, on the broad meadows around Bear Lake (on the Utah-Idaho line); in 1829 and 1838, in the valley of the Popo Agie (with a later, ancillary meeting at Pierre's Hole); in 1830, near the confluence of the Wind River and the Bighorn (or more precisely, where geographers changed the name of the Wind to Bighorn—the Indians and mountain men knew it was the same river); in 1832, at Pierre's Hole; in 1834, on Hams Fork of the Green River; and in 1833, 1835–37, and 1839–40, along the Green River itself, usually in the vicinity of Horse Creek or New Fork.

Although the quest for pelts might take a trapper south

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*This article is adapted from material in* Rendezvous Country *by David Muench and Donald G. Pike, to be released by the American West Publishing Company on September 1.*

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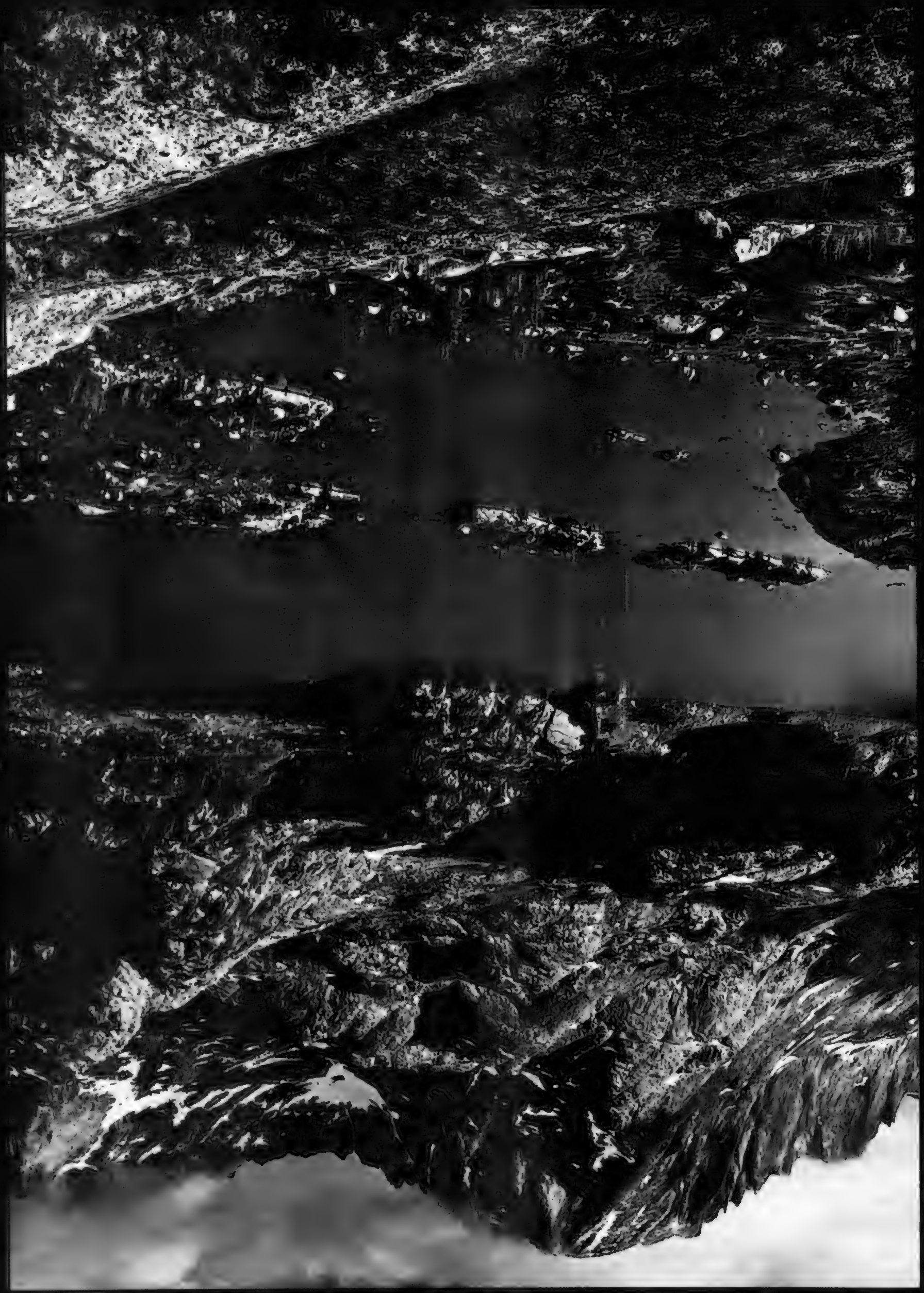
***When spring arrives in rendezvous country, thawing streams break out with abandon, heralding the time of renewal in a thunderous chorus.***



*Unofficial symbol of a nation's westering, the buffalo had largely disappeared west of the divide before the Rocky Mountain fur trade had run its course.*

to the Sangre de Cristo Range in modern New Mexico, or north beyond the Missouri River, or as far west as California and Oregon, the summer always brought a return to this ring of mountains and the basin they encircled. From the north, and pointing southeast along the continental divide, the Wind River Range of Wyoming provides the highest and most rugged arm of the circle. Its eastern flank is traced by the Wind River and its valley down to a confluence with the Popo Agie near where the parallel mountains disappear beneath the plains. South from the end of the Wind Rivers, stretching away in the wide and rolling country that became the gateway for a nation moving west, is South Pass and the broken hill country that drops off to the west of the continental divide. Spanning the southern reaches of rendezvous country are the Uinta Mountains of Utah, which break tradition with the rest of the Rockies by lying emphatically east and west. To the west lies the northern end of the Wasatch Range, outlined by the incredible course of Bear River, which runs north off the skirts of the Uintas for nearly a hundred miles, before bending in a great westerly arc around the Wasatch and heading due south for Great Salt Lake. The northwestern corner of rendezvous country is completed in the interlocking chain of the Salt River, Snake River, and Teton ranges of Idaho and Wyoming.

It is, as one student of the region remarked, "a geographer's nightmare," for it responds to no simple generalizations. The waters of three great river systems are spawned here—the Missouri (in Wind River), the Colorado (in the Green), and the Columbia (in the Snake River headwaters)—in what seems to be an interlocking network of tributaries. Consider the case of the Green and the Bear: tributaries of Blacks Fork, which in turn joins the Green, rise within ten miles of the upper reaches of the Bear, and yet the Green and the Bear parallel one another, flowing in opposite directions into entirely different bodies of water seven hundred miles apart. It was enough to ruin a mountain man's whole day, especially if he was a little lost in the first place.

The heart of rendezvous country is the Green River Basin of southwestern Wyoming, a broad depression that varies from amply watered ranch- and farmland along its western and northern reaches to semiarid saltbrush and greasewood desert in the southeast. The major artery of the basin, the

**Preceding two pages:** ***In a world built on rock, life grips the highest alpine reaches of Wyoming's Wind River Range with a shallow foothold.***

*Despite comic visage and ungainly appearance, a moose in rutting season can become an agile, aggressive menace to the unwary.*

Green River, begins life high on the slopes of the Wind River Range and is fed during the course of its journey by hundreds of creeks and streams that rise in the Snake River, Salt River, and Uinta mountains. The Indians had named the river Seedskeedee (or Seat Kadee, Siskadee, or Seetskeedee—take your pick as they are all just a marginally literate white man's rendering of an Indian word) in honor of the prairie chicken who annually puffs up his throat, ruffles his feathers, and dances a thundering mating ritual along its banks. The mountain men retained the name until government mapmakers decided about 1840 that the Spaniards who called it Rio Verde knew more about the river than the trappers, and changed the name to Green River. Bernard DeVoto staunchly maintained that it was really the Colorado River, which it joins in southern Utah, because it is not only longer than the fork now known as the Colorado River, but it shows more characteristics in common with the lower portion of the Colorado. Fortunately, there are enough longtime residents who still insist that the Indians were right and, the professional meddlers be damned, that the river and the basin it drains will always be known as the Seedskeedee.

RENDEZVOUS COUNTRY as we know it today first started to take shape in the fire and folding of the Laramide revolution that began to lift the entire Rocky Mountain chain a hundred million years ago. In a series of pulses and pauses the upheaval continued for almost fifty million years, as great granite cores pushed up to form mountains like the Wind Rivers. The land shattered along fault lines, huge blocks tilted up to form abrupt scarps like the western face of the Wasatch, and the pressure of the earth's displaced skin squeezed and folded basins into ranges. Wind and water began their slow but inexorable work, gradually eroding the new land, cutting declivities and canyons, wearing and weathering the mountains to the wrinkled respectability of age.

About three million years ago the wind and water were joined by Pleistocene glaciers, which moved forward at least three times to mold and scrape the region, serrating ridges and carving huge U-shaped valleys. As they retreated, the glaciers left terminal moraines—the great prows of rock and rubble the ice pushed ahead of itself—to block small canyons and create the myriad lakes that remain today on the slopes. By most reckonings the Ice Age is past, but high in

**Overleaf:** ***A winter sunrise tints peaks of the Cathedral Group in the Tetons above Jackson Hole.***

sun-sheltered clefts of the Wind River Range a number of small glaciers survive, waiting for the world's temperature to drop a few degrees so they can complete the work they started.

Weather is the final arbiter of life in rendezvous country, and it exercises this prerogative in an infinite number of moods of wind, rain, heat, snow, and cold. It determines what will blossom, and what must suffer the slow death of drought; it brings gentle zephyrs and warm rains that nurture and encourage life, but it also can lay fierce winds and long, cold winters on the land, gripping plants and animals in a fist that is as ruthless as drought. But while weather may strike extremes or changes with dizzying abruptness, it sustains life because every plant and creature has accepted these facts and adapted itself accordingly—and life is very good for those that have found their place.

The land of the Seedskeedee rises in the path of the prevailing westerly winds that blow across the continent all year. Although these winds carry most of the moisture that collects here, the mountains are the agent of delivery, forcing the clouds up into cooler air where they precipitate rain and snow. Thus the mountains will register rainfall of twenty or more inches per year, while the valleys and basin on the eastern lee of the mountains are lucky to gather eight or ten inches.

Wind is a fact of life in the region. During the winter it blows hard and dry across the basin, churning equally dry and gritty snow into blinding ground blizzards and giving rise to the kind of local wit that suggests that not much snow falls, but a lot blows through; and that what does fall, doesn't melt—it just blows around until it wears out. Winds are also created within the region, bringing sudden changes in local climate that surprise newcomers. As the first rays of the morning sun warm the air high in mountain valleys, the air rises, drawing cool breezes from the lower, moister valleys. By afternoon this cool, damp air will have been pushed against the mountain heights, precipitating a sudden, brief thundershower. There is probably no more dramatic wind that blows through rendezvous country, however, than the fabled chinook.

The warm, dry winds of the chinook strike suddenly in the winter and spring, sometimes raising the temperature forty degrees in a half-hour and thawing the snowpack into an avalanche of floodwaters. The chinook is born in cold, wet winds that rise up the western slope of the mountains, cooling still more until all the moisture is wrung out as rain or snow. The condensation necessary for precipitation raises the temperature of the air, and as the wind starts down the eastward slope it is warmed by the decreasing altitude, until it arrives in the basin as a dry, warm wind.

The mountains and their weather combine to lay a varied mantle of plant life over the region in a patchwork of grasses, flowers, bushes, and trees that succor man and wildlife alike. But while the variety may seem infinite, there is an orderly system of life zones at work. In the semiarid lowland of the basin, sagebrush, saltbrush, hop sage, and greasewood predominate, their hard-surfaced exteriors and sparse foliage resisting desiccation by wind and sun. The short grasses that grow here—needle grass and buffalo grass—are similarly narrow stemmed and deep rooted, gathering all the water available and relinquishing as little as possible. But in the well-watered river bottoms that cut across the basin, broad-leaved trees like cottonwood, box elder, and willow can thrive.

As the land begins to rise, as at the eastern end of the Uintas, the sagebrush gives way (if rainfall is adequate) to grasslands of blue grama and bluestem, which are laced with lupine and other wild flowers in the spring. Higher still is foothill scrub, where the grasses are joined by low-growing mountain mahogany and juniper. At about 6,000 feet the montane, or timbered mountain, zone begins, rising through growths of yellow pine, Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, and, as the altitude approaches 10,000 or 11,000 feet, stands of Engelmann spruce, whitebark pine, and subalpine fir. At almost any point from foothills to timberline where creeks and springs create lush meadows, quaking aspen and willow take over in a glittering exuberance of sunlight and color. Above timberline, in the rocky, windswept country of long winters, sedges, bear grass, and tiny alpine flowers burst in a brief frenzy of growth before the early snows protect them from high arctic winds.

Latitude changes the relative altitudes of zones; to the north, in the Wind River Range, for instance, timberline begins at about 10,000 feet, while farther south, in the Uintas, the greater exposure to sunlight and marginally lower temperatures raise timberline to 11,000 feet. But probably a greater disparity is noted in the microclimates created by a slope's exposure to the sun. In a typical mountain river valley, the south-facing slopes—which receive direct sunlight for a longer time during the day—will be thick with conifers and aspen, while the shady north-facing slopes will support mountain mahogany and scrub oak. The valley at the same time will maintain box elder and cottonwood, interspersed with aspen, meadow grass, and garlands of wild flowers.

It is this interweaving of life zones, rather than any orderly pattern, that typifies the whole of rendezvous country. It is a land that defies generalization or simple consistency in a triumphant insistence on pursuing life in its own way. And in this the land was characteristic of the men who first found a living, and then a lifeway, in it—and in some measure those who still do today.

**David Muench** *is a leading western scenic photographer. Books featuring his work have included* Timberline Ancients, New Mexico, Rocky Mountains, *and* Anasazi: Ancient People of the Rock.

**Donald G. Pike,** *a former staff writer for the American West Publishing Company, is author of numerous magazine articles and coauthor of* The Magnificent Rockies, The Great Northwest, *and* Anasazi: Ancient People of the Rock.

***Winding through the park that bears its name, Yellowstone River flows in an arresting counterpoint of virgin water and much-labored rock.***

**A Matter of Opinion**

# Custeriana

TO THE EDITOR:

Readers of "Arise, Ye Custer Fans!" (A Matter of Opinion," January 1975 issue of THE AMERICAN WEST) may be interested to learn that an organization of dedicated explorers exists "to seek and preserve the truth about the Battle of the Little Big Horn and all Custeriana." This group is called the Little Big Horn Associates. Dues are $7.50 per year, and interested readers may contact Mrs. Susan Harris, Treasurer, 6717 46th Avenue, S.W., Seattle, Washington. Membership includes subscriptions to the monthly *LBHA Newsletter* and the quarterly *Research Review*. Plans are also under way for an annual volume.

John F. McCormack, Jr.
Editor, *Research Review*
West Chester, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

The "Matter of Opinion" letter regarding George Armstrong Custer and the accompanying review of Custer books in the January issue brought to mind an incident from my younger days which may be of interest.

It occurred during the summer of 1928. In those days, our family spent its vacations at Eaton's Ranch in northern Wyoming. Alden Eaton, one of three brothers who came west from Pittsburgh to found what was probably the first dude ranch, invited my father and three other men to join him on a trek to inspect the site of the Battle of the Little Big Horn. The others invited were a Colonel Hall, whose entire army life had been spent fighting Indians, a General Harries, who had also fought Indians in his early days, and Col. George C. Marshall, whose most notable years of service still lay ahead.

One August morning, box lunches in hand, the five men set forth in the ranch's trusty Dodge touring car. Equipped with maps, reference books, and measuring tapes, they were in high spirits as they left, confident they would settle once and for all the question of whether General Custer was a hero or a foolhardy, disobedient soldier.

The field where "Custer's Last Stand" took place lies on a hill in open country, with an unobstructed view, and the action of the battle is comparatively easy to define since a gravestone marks the spot where each soldier fell. Forgetting to eat their lunches, the men marched and deployed, taking turns representing the soldiers and Indians. They became so engrossed in reliving the famous fight that they failed to notice gathering storm clouds and didn't stop their search back through history until after the first drops of rain had fallen. The men scrambled for the car, but before they were halfway home the erstwhile dry, dusty road had turned into sticky gumbo, and the dependable Dodge was hopelessly mired in the gooey mess.

By this time it was dusk and there was nothing left to do but to get out and walk to the nearest house. There, with true western hospitality, they were welcomed and given food and shelter for the night. They telephoned the ranch to give their location in the hopes that some means would be found to rescue them.

Stored away in a section of the big ranch barn was a stagecoach which was brought out once a year for the Frontier Day celebration, then returned to its corner and carefully covered for protection from dirt and dampness. At daybreak the following morning it was still raining, but ranch hands unwrapped the coach, pulled it out, and harnessed up six spooky young horses. At the head of each animal stood a cowboy holding the bridle while two brave fellows climbed aboard the coach, one grasping the reins and the other taking a firm grip on the brake handle. The horses had never been driven before and their departure did nothing to allay the anxiety of the wives of the stranded men—as soon as the team was released, it broke into a wild gallop down the road, the stagecoach careening perilously behind.

Some twelve hours later the stagecoach returned to the ranch. It was pulled at a slow, plodding walk by an exhausted, muddy team of horses and was occupied by equally exhausted and muddy cowboys and passengers.

In the relief of having the explorers safely back, no one asked for an opinion about General Custer. But during the days that followed, the subject of conversation finally drifted from the horrors of gumbo and the rigors of riding in an unsprung stagecoach to the military maneuvers which did or did not take place in the Battle of the Little Big Horn. I was too young and too disinterested to remember the many details that were discussed, but I do remember that the unanimous opinion of those five qualified men—one of whom was to become a five-star general and secretary of state—was that "Custer was a damn fool."

Anne A. Taylor
Indianapolis, Indiana

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A MATTER OF OPINION *is provided as an open forum. Contributions from our readers are invited, but should be limited to 750 words and must be signed.*

# Charles M. Russell

REVIEWED BY ERWIN N. THOMPSON

IN JAMES MICHENER'S fictional work *Centennial,* his storyteller calls Charles M. Russell "a lush." Unquestionably, Russell could bend a good elbow. He could also wield a paintbrush or a pencil with consummate skill. Another criticism that has been directed at Russell is that he was a competent illustrator but barely an artist. If this opinion still lives, the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art's Charles M. Russell Collection, displayed so brilliantly in this book, should dispel any lingering doubts of Russell's status in art history. The proof is present that he was a great American artist of the West, particularly of his adopted Montana.

**Charles M. Russell** by Frederic G. Renner, with foreword by Ruth Carter Johnson *(Abrams, New York, 1974, 316 pp., 248 illus., biblio., appen., notes, $40.00).*

Russell came to Montana at the right time (1880), when Indians, cowboys, animals (wild and tame), the open range, and gunfighters still dominated the scene. It was a way of life already threatened by fences and "civilization." Earning his living as a sheepherder (briefly) and a cowhand (for eleven years), Russell painted and sketched his companions at work and play, developing as he went along his talents of motion, color, and composition. In the beginning he probably did not take art seriously. This attitude is evident in two paintings done in 1887 (plates 5 and 7 in the book here under review); one of these is of exceptionally high quality, the other is awkward and its composition is a disaster.

In his introduction, Frederic G. Renner, a long-time admirer of and friend to Russell, has provided an eloquent essay on the man and the artist. Renner describes how Russell won first the admiration of his fellow cowboys and the ranchers; then the interest of the people of Montana; and finally national acclaim. Should one desire that the introduction dwell more on the art itself, one should read on. The chapter headings and the copious captions present a fuller history, if not an analysis.

Arranged both topically and chronologically, from pictures to bronzes, from original models to association items, this book omits practically nothing of significance from the Carter Collection. Here is Russell from his earliest clumsy efforts (when he could draw horses but not men), through his "brown period," into the time when he portrayed Indians, cowboys, buffalo, and gentle and fancy ladies (but no frontier soldiers in this volume) with power and truth. To study the evolution of Russell's skills from, say, "Roping 'Em (plate 2) to any one of his mature works is to give hope to anyone who aspires to develop his own artistic talent. Such beauty and serenity as are portrayed in "Sun Worship in Montana" (plate 188), such vitality and exhilaration as are displayed in "A Tight Dally and a Loose Latigo" (plate 197) demonstrate an artist's full control and understanding of the human condition and its environment. Russell's whimsical, earthy humor is also represented by "Joy of Life" and "Just a Little Sunshine . . ." (plates 228–32).

In this period when we seem to be increasingly introspective concerning our past uses and misuses of our resources, we can appreciate Russell's almost countless depictions of a relative balance in nature, when Indians killed bison only to fulfill their basic needs. In a similar vein, but with regard to humanity, we can contemplate the sketch of a bully cowboy making a Chinese dance to a .44. In both cases, Russell drew what he witnessed. He told the truth.

One cannot but admire this immensely beautiful book. It contains approximately two hundred fifty illustrations of Russell's works, eighty of which are in magnificent color—almost certainly the best color representations of his art that have ever appeared in book form. Twelve of the color reproductions are foldouts, the largest of which measures no less than twelve by twenty-four inches. Also, all fifty-three bronzes cast in Russell's lifetime are depicted. (Warning: this book is too heavy and too large to hold comfortably in one's lap.) Renner, the Amon Carter Museum, the book designer, and the publisher, all deserve praise for this rich production of Charles Russell's work.

Forty dollars is a lot of money for a book. But most of us will never be able to afford the humblest of Russell's originals. Those who admire his work or who find it historically significant could make no better buy than this volume. Those who consider Russell a mere illustrator should probably save their cash for something more to their liking.

**Erwin N. Thompson** *of Denver, Colorado, is a National Park Service historian specializing in historic preservation.*

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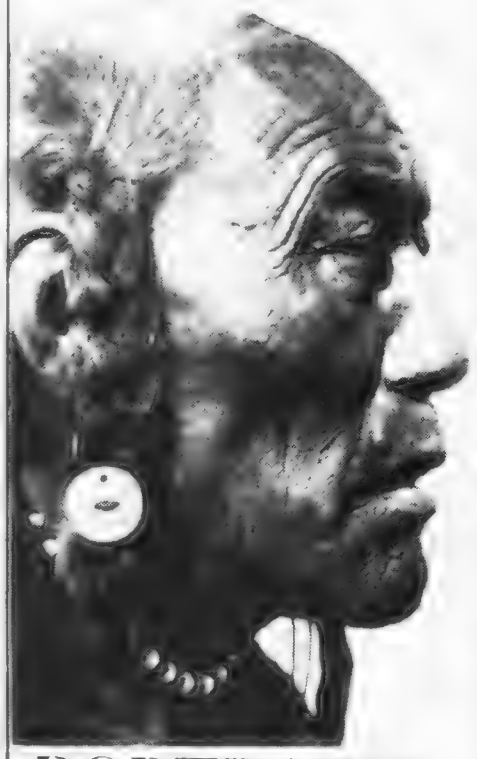

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# Idaho

REVIEWED BY DAVID SUMNER

AT A TIME when major eastern publishers are growing increasingly skittish about large-format, four-color books, the appearance of Robert O. Beatty's *Idaho* is an especially welcome surprise. This is an impressive (11″ x 14″), rich, quality volume throughout; there has been no scrimping with photography or text either at the press or in the bindery. These features alone would set this book apart, but two more make *Idaho* even more unusual. It is published by a bank (Idaho First National of Boise), and it recently completed its second major printing (30,000 copies are now out). In short, *Idaho* is already an unqualified success by a first-time publisher in these recessionary days when many other good picture books are popping up on the remainder tables.

**Idaho** by Robert O. Beatty *(Idaho First National Bank, Boise, 1974; 207 pp., illus., biblio., photo index, $35.00).*

While significant to the publishing industry, *Idaho*'s story may well have an even greater long-term importance for the well-being of the West in particular. With David Brower's launching of the Sierra Club's Exhibit Format Series in the early 1960s, the large, photographic book became a real, albeit subtle and indirect, force in the environmental movement. Les Line's fine, graphic editing of *Audubon* magazine has had a similar effect; likewise the tide of commercially produced pictorial volumes, which is now ebbing. Whatever their intent, all these and *Idaho* too cannot help but sensitize the reader to the living landscapes they portray—their forms, plant life, and wildlife. If these books pass out of vogue, something more than pretty coffee table volumes will eventually be lost.

Beatty's *Idaho* is not an environmentalist tract—far from it. As he modestly states in his introduction, "it is an effort to give the reader an honest feeling of what the land of Idaho and its people were and are all about . . . the distillation of impressions—visual, visceral and verbal." It is an effort to portray the spirit, tone, and texture of a place. Here there is nothing shrill or polemical; leafing through *Idaho,* one's dominant impressions are those of appreciation, deep affection, and occasionally even awe. Beatty has sunk his roots firmly into Idaho (see his article, "Essay from an Old Cabin" in the March 1975 issue of THE AMERICAN WEST); this love for the land shows steadily throughout his book.

*Idaho* has over 350 pictures (312 of them in color); to complete this collection Beatty wisely tapped over one hundred photographers. The result is a clean, quiet absence of any individual or idiosyncratic artistic style—a transparent effect that draws attention not to the photographer, but to a subject, Idaho, with an almost classic clarity. The visual variety is vast—not only the many well composed nature shots, but also images of people who now live close to the land (ranchers, farmers, sheepherders, outdoorsmen) and relics of those who did likewise in the past (headframes, wagon wheels, a grave marker, a Palouse pictograph). *Idaho* begins with a chapter of early-day black-and-whites, and concludes with a delicate series of close-up "Idaho Textures." Between is a series of chapters taking the reader on a region-by-region exploration of the state.

Beatty's text weaves carefully through the pictures, avoiding the segregation of words and pictures that often fractures volumes like this. His tone is warm and conversational throughout (in a fireside vein); his range is substantial.

The Idaho First National Bank's role behind this book is a model of responsible, reserved stewardship. Hopefully, too, it is a harbinger of an important departure in regional publishing—one which will help keep the large pictorial alive, along with a certain appreciation of this land and its gifts.

**David Sumner** *is a free-lance writer and photographer, coauthor of the recently published book* Rocky Mountains, *and former editor of Colorado magazine.*

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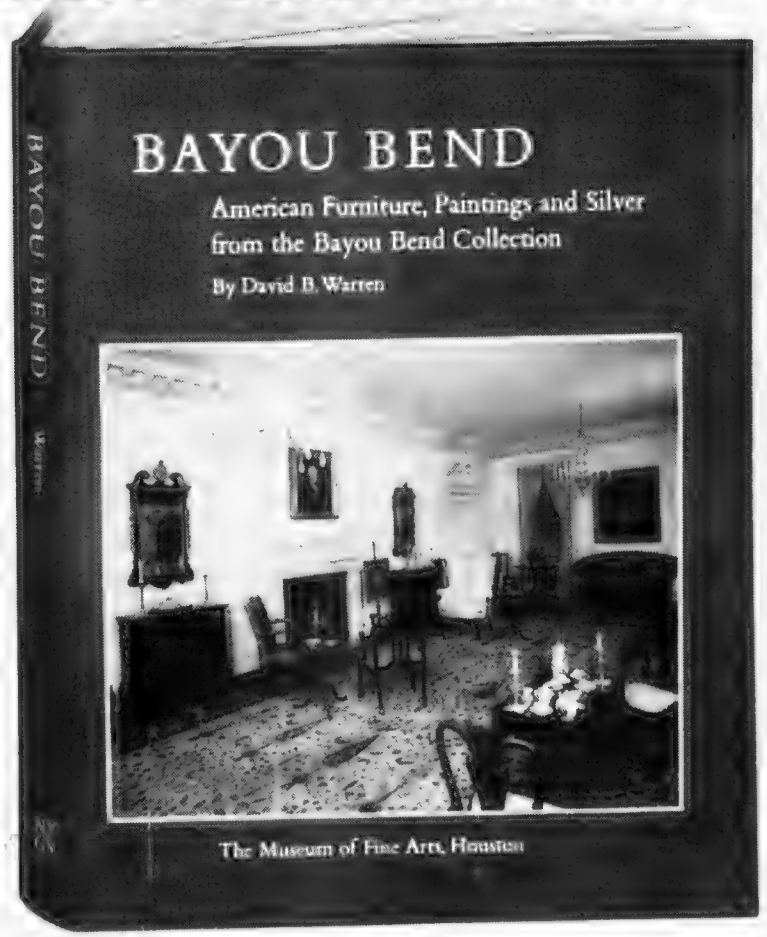
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# The Frank Tenney Johnson Book

REVIEWED BY ROBERT W. RICHMOND

FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON (1874–1939) began his art education in Milwaukee and then moved to New York City to seek his fortune. He got his first big break in 1904 when *Field and Stream* sent him west with a railroad ticket, the cost of which was to be repaid by Johnson's magazine illustrations. He went to Colorado and gained firsthand knowledge of cattle ranching and he visited the Navajo country of New Mexico.

**The Frank Tenney Johnson Book** by Harold McCracken *(Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1974, 207 pp., illus., biblio., index, $30.00).*

He returned to New York to work for leading magazines and book publishers but in 1912 he went west again, this time with his wife, Vinnie. She kept a diary of their travels in Montana, along the Pacific Coast, and through the Southwest. More trips followed, including a transcontinental one by Model-T in 1918. California attracted them in the early 1920s and in 1926 they went to Alhambra for good. By then Johnson was well known and his paintings were selling for handsome prices, but he still liked to work in the unspoiled part of the West so he spent summers painting in Wyoming.

Johnson had a good eye for detail and his representations of people, animals, and scenery are faithful ones. He also had a special way of capturing nocturnal light. The glow from a doorway, moonlight on a hillside, or a flickering match lighting a cowboy's cigarette all seem very real.

Johnson grew up as the frontier was disappearing but he had the good sense to seek out areas where vestiges of an older West still survived.

Harold McCracken has put the artist into an attractive package and the pictures do not suffer in the reproductions. However, there are some editorial shortcomings and McCracken's sometimes stilted and redundant prose detracts from the parts of the text made up of quoted letters and diaries. The contemporary material is fascinating and it could have been used to tell more of the story.

For the past half-century Johnson has commanded the respect of artists and critics, curators and collectors. But, to the ordinary viewer of Western art, he has generally been overshadowed by Remington and Russell. This volume should make Johnson better known, although its size and price may limit its distribution.

**Robert W. Richmond** *is State Archivist of Kansas. His most recent book is* Kansas: A Land of Contrasts *(1974).*

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***—Sacramento Bee***

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# The Indian in America

REVIEWED BY PETER CARROLL

THERE IS an old Teton Sioux aphorism that "a people without history is like the wind upon the buffalo grass." Such a people, of course, probably never existed. But there is a tendency among historians to neglect—sometimes inadvertently—the historical dimensions of nonliterate societies. Where historians have placed preeminent value on the written word, the American Indians have suffered from this cultural myopia.

**The Indian in America** by Wilcomb E. Washburn *(Harper & Row, New York, 1975; 296 pp., illus., maps, biblio., notes, index, $10.00).*

Wilcomb Washburn's book provides a necessary corrective to some of the traditional stereotypes. Relying upon recent research, Washburn has produced a coherent portrait of native American life during the past five hundred years. Beginning with some general statements about native cultures and political organization, the author traces the complex history of red-white relations from the original interaction based on mutual interest to the more familiar narrative of military confrontation.

Throughout the book Washburn strives to explain this racial antagonism as a logical result of countering cultural perspectives. White Americans, he argues, did not usually intend to exterminate the natives—though that was often the effect of official policy. Thus human misunderstanding assumes a primary role in the analysis of broken treaties and the disruption of traditional tribal patterns. Such explanations, however objective and neutral in appearance, are often less than satisfying.

Consider, for example, Andrew Jackson's endorsement of the removal of the southern tribes from Georgia. "Jackson's words," writes Washburn, "seem hollow now, but it is difficult to argue that they were meant to be hollow." Yet the Cherokees themselves saw through Jackson's rhetoric. "I have heard a great many talks from our great father," said Speckled Snake in 1830, "and they all begun and ended the same." To conclude that Jackson was simply an innocent exponent of sociological circumstances, therefore, absolves the president from his moral obligation to support the Constitution and the earlier treaties with the Cherokees. More important, it dismisses the historical validity of Speckled Snake's disarmingly accurate commentary.

The major contribution of this volume is its summation of the present state of scholarship in this field of study. Given the wide varieties of native cultures, this is indeed a formidable achievement. Washburn has succeeded, for the most part, in selecting the most significant areas for detailed analysis. One of the few important omissions, however, is a discussion of the size of the native population prior to European contact. During the past decade, anthropologists have suggested that as many as ten million people may have inhabited North America in the age of Columbus.

While Washburn has managed to incorporate a diversity of information, the quality of his synthesis reflects the limitations of previous scholars. It is not surprising, therefore, that the strongest portions of the book focus upon the early history of the native societies, an area which has long attracted anthropological attention. Yet the treatment of red-white relations, particularly in the later stages of American expansion, often hinges on a single source. One salutary effect of this volume would be to stimulate other historians to examine some of the neglected areas.

Until such books are written, Washburn's work will remain the best starting-point. Though not the most lucid of books, it manages to present a clear, concise, and generally fair treatment of an extremely controversial aspect of the American past.

**Peter Carroll** *is author of* Puritanism and the Wilderness *(1969) and coauthor of* The Restless Centuries: A History of the American People *(1973).*

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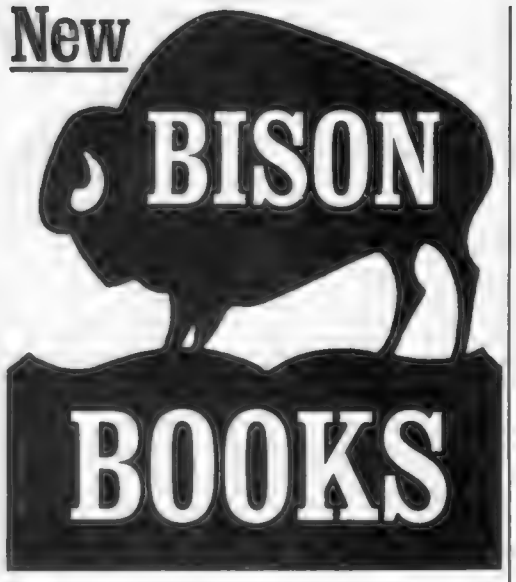


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**Black Jack Davidson: A Cavalry Commander on the Western Frontier** by Homer K. Davidson *(Arthur H. Clark, Glendale, 1974; 273 pp., illus., map, biblio., notes, index, chron., $15.50).*

REVIEWED BY LEROY H. FISCHER

THIS IS THE FIRST book-length biography of Maj. Gen. John W. Davidson, a cavalry commander significantly involved in opening the West, and a close associate of Stephen W. Kearny, E. R. S. Canby, Benjamin H. Grierson, Ranald Mackenzie, George A. Custer, Nelson A. Miles, Albert Sidney Johnston, Philip St. George Cooke, and J. H. Carleton. Davidson's career spanned thirty-six years of army service from 1845 to 1881.

A native of Virginia, Davidson came from a military family. Both he and his father graduated from the United States Military Academy. After being commissioned a brevet second lieutenant in the elite First Dragoons, young Davidson was assigned to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; thus he began his military service in the West.

Except for assignments in the East and South during the Civil War, Davidson's duty stations were in the West and Southwest through most of his long military career, and for nearly all of his army life frontier forts were his home. Commanding both black and white troopers, he headed the Second and Tenth Cavalry Regiments and saw duty at such forts as Leavenworth, Fillmore, Buchanan, Tejon, Riley, Griffin, Sill, Richardson, Custer, and Camp Supply. The important role he played in helping pacify and secure the frontier for settlement took him into frequent combat against the Apache, Comanche, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Sioux Indians.

The author is Davidson's grandson and probably for this reason seems overly concerned about the image of his subject, who in fact needs no apology or justification. Overall, the book is thoroughly researched and objectively written.

**LeRoy H. Fischer,** *Oppenheim regents professor of history at Oklahoma State University, authors and edits books on the Civil War and the American West.*

**North of 53°: The Wild Days of the Alaska-Yukon Mining Frontier 1870–1914** by William R. Hunt *(Macmillan, New York, 1974; 328 pp., intro., illus., maps, biblio., notes, epilogue, $12.95).*

REVIEWED BY GEORGE WILLIAMS

A VERY COLORFUL and exciting chronicle of the violent and chaotic Klondike gold rush days has appeared on the scene. William Hunt weaves a tale of suspense involving lawless communities of gamblers, con men, whores, pimps, trigger-happy men; and of miners, cowboys, casual laborers, farmers, students, professional men, bankers, journalists, and businessmen. All of them searched for fortunes to be achieved through "King Gold"—and many of them carried away tremendous amounts of the precious metal.

Hunt describes a very loose and often absent system of justice, made worse by the lukewarm support of the federal government and by frequently dishonest judges. This book is also a story of eager, immature Americans rushing to the goldfields by sea and land routes (such as the Valdez Trail and the Yukon River), without any knowledge of or preparation for the rugged conditions and horrifying disasters that awaited them. And it is the tale of the colorful personalities who answered the challenge of the Klondike: lawmakers and politicians like Judge Wickersham, high roller gamblers and entrepreneurs like "Tex" Lewis Rickard, con men like Wilson Mizer, and writers like Jack London and Rex Beach.

If there are faults with this book, they are evidenced by sometimes confusing shifts in topic—often, just as Hunt interests us in an area, he abruptly changes direction. One wishes that he had more fully developed his excellent, but often brief original source material and concentrated on fewer themes and topics.

For a better organized and less rambling (though probably less colorful) account of Alaska's gold rush days, read David B. Wharton's *The Alaska Gold Rush (Indiana Univ., 1972, $10.00).*

**George Williams** *is an educational consultant on higher education and a recent teacher-administrator at the University of Denver.*

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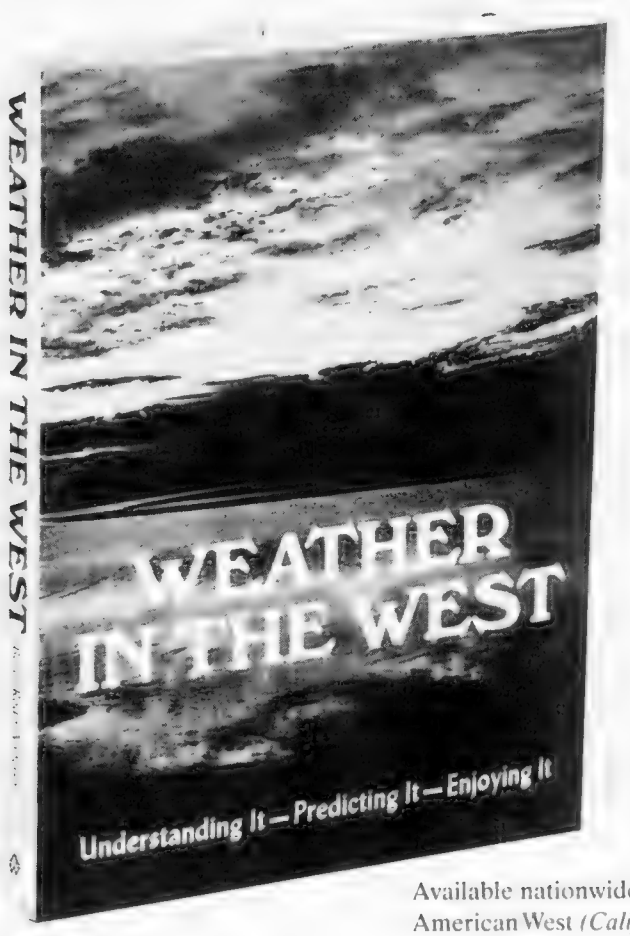


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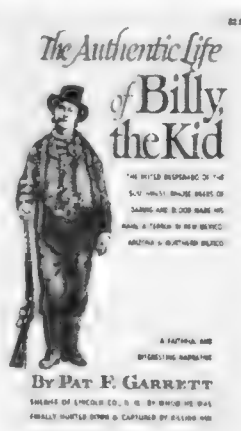


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**Rodeo Road: My Life as a Pioneer Cowgirl** by Vera McGinnis *(Hastings House, New York, 1974; 225 pp., illus., $7.95).*

REVIEWED BY VICKI LEON

HAD IT BEEN PUBLISHED before the feminist movement made such "women who" books popular, Vera McGinnis' chirpy autobiography of her days as a rodeo champion cowgirl and jockey might have been left at the starting gate. Weakened by the excessive use of hokey, ersatz-western lingo ("you ranihans quit tormentin' that gal") and marred by occasional superficiality, nevertheless the book is a poignant, likeable story of a gutsy and modest woman.

For twenty-one years Vera McGinnis, 110 pounds of true Missouri grit, collected trophies, horses, and broken bones on the wild west/rodeo/county fair circuit. From 1913, when she first talked herself into a relay-riding job in Salt Lake City, to 1934, when her career was shattered for good by a major accident, Vera's blonde, belligerent beauty was a crowd-pleaser.

Like the handful of other women in the rodeo business, "Mac" earned her daily bread trick-riding and relay-riding. Unlike other women, she also took on and triumphed in the more grueling events: roman racing (standing astride a yoked pair of horses), bull- and bronco-busting, and thoroughbred racing.

Her talents took her from Bakersfield to the London Coliseum; her restlessness, from Honolulu to Hanoi to Hollywood, where she worked as an actress and a stunt-woman. Earning high acclaim but little money, Vera's tenacity saw her through all obstacles she met save one: the classic conflict of marriage versus career. Her account of the breakup of her first marriage is handled in a moving, understated way, and is one of the book's major strengths.

There is a special irony to Vera's story: forty-one years after the end of her trailblazing career, women today are excluded from bull- and bronco-busting competition.

**Vicki Leon** *is a free-lance writer/photographer whose work has appeared in a number of nationwide publications.*

**Custer and the Epic of Defeat** by Bruce A. Rosenberg *(Pennsylvania State University, University Park, 1974; 313 pp., illus., index, $13.50).*

REVIEWED BY JAMES H. NOTTAGE

THIS BOOK is about heroes, epic tales, and the legend-making process. It is a story about hilltop heroes from the times of Saul and Leonidas to "the year of a hundred years," when the mighty Sioux and Cheyenne rode over the Seventh Cavalry at Little Big Horn. The author begins with Custer and traces the formation of the legend around him. Using this as a model he then looks at the epics of Roland, Arthur, and others. Comparing the stories he tries to see if generalizations can be made about the way in which the different heroes are treated and their stories told.

The group of great men is referred to collectively and provokingly as the "Custer Cluster." Although the comparisons are often speculative, the author feels he can say something about how legends spread and how long they take to develop. Most of the "great losers" referred to are shown to share certain elements in their mythical stories. For example, there is usually a hilltop; the hero has a sword, makes a final call for help, inflicts great casualties on the enemy, and is the last to die; there is often a traitor, and usually a lone survivor.

The different formal and informal mediums, such as prose, poetry, paintings, and oral tradition, through which a legend is created, are looked at and the author reinterprets what is known of several epics on the basis of his findings. He offers no new factual information on Custer or the massacre, but takes basic facts and compares them with the more imaginative narrations of the battle as they developed in the popular consciousness.

Rosenberg has much to say and he says it well. For scholars of comparative literature, students of western history, Custer buffs, intellectual historians, and those interested in American folklore, *Custer and the Epic of Defeat* will be of interest and lasting value.

**James H. Nottage,** *a former museum curator, is working on a graduate degree in Cooperstown, New York.*

**The Grand Tetons** with text and photographs by Boyd Norton *(Viking, New York, 1974; 128 pp., illus., map, photo notes, $17.95).*

REVIEWED BY DON GREAME KELLEY

THE SUDDEN and perhaps unexpected first view of the Grand Teton range is an experience that many cherish and few forget. It happened to Boyd Norton fifteen years ago with dramatic suddenness (and total unexpectedness) because, driving through the Absarokas, he thought he had just *crossed* the Tetons. "Fresh from college with a degree in physics and an eye toward California," he got no farther than Jackson Hole, "choosing instead to settle somewhere near these magnificent Tetons—*my* Tetons." One does feel that way about them very quickly. Employment at the AEC's National Reactor Testing Station in Idaho gave Norton his opportunity. That he has made good use of it is amply attested both in this book by the 81 full-color plates backing a strong text, which is historical, descriptive, and narrative in nature, and by two other books, *Snake Wilderness* and *Rivers of the Rockies,* plus a great amount of other published photography. He is also a climber and conservationist.

*The Grand Tetons* gives us (whether or not we have that "first view" to recall) a very attractive memory book. It also gave an author with all the right credentials an unhappily suitable subject to exemplify what is happening to our national parks. It is as true as it is trite, already, to warn that we are loving them to death. Grand Teton National Park is simply too small to accommodate three million visitors in one summer. With Boyd Norton, we "would like to imagine that in the year 2029" when the park will be 100 years old "the visitor to the Tetons will find it still a lovely and wild place; that through stabilizing population and a tripling in size of the national park system, the parks will be even less crowded than today." If one's only hope of seeing the Tetons is through a book, this one will serve very well.

**Don Greame Kelley,** *former editor of* Oceans *magazine, is now working on a follow-up volume to* Edge of a Continent.


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## BOOKS IN BRIEF

By Larry Zelenak

**The King's Highway in Baja California** by Harry Crosby *(Copley Books, San Diego, 1974; 182 pp., illus., maps, biblio., glossary, index, $14.50).*

Two hundred years ago Jesuit missionaries, Spanish explorers, and Indians followed the path of the El Camino Real in Baja California. Later, the road laid down by the padres was used by European settlers and gold-seeking forty-niners. But then it fell into disuse. Author-photographer Crosby was the first person in a hundred years to penetrate many of the abandoned parts of the old trail. In this book he has recorded his observations of Baja California—the past and the present of the land and its people.

**Backyard Classic** by Lambert Florin *(Superior, Seattle, 1975; 160 pp., illus., $13.95).*

One rather modest but essential structure has long been overlooked by historians of architecture—the outhouse. Lambert Florin, shocked at such shameful neglect, has written a book to correct this sorry situation. Included in his collection of over one hundred notable privies are Oregon's "first high rise privy," a double-decker in California, a beauty in Colorado with paneled walls and a carpeted floor, and a "room with a view" near the summit of Mount Hood.

**Military Posts of Wyoming** by Robert A. Murray *(The Old Army Press, Ft. Collins, Colorado, 1974; 102 pp., illus., intro., maps, $10.00; $4.95, paper).*

The story of the military's early history in Wyoming is well told by a pleasant, informative text and through more than seventy drawings and photographs.

**Trailing the Longhorns** by Sue Flanagan *(Madrona Press, Austin, 1974; 212 pp., illus., maps, notes, biblio., index, $18.50).*

The cattle industry grew out of Texas' struggle for economic recovery following the Civil War. The great cattle drives lasted only a generation but they gave birth to the myth and literature of the American cowboy. Sue Flanagan spent almost ten years, from 1965 to 1974, retracing the routes of Goodnight and Chisolm trails. Her impressions, recorded with camera and pen, recreate the Texas of a century ago.

**Artists of the American West: A Biographical Dictionary** by Doris Ostrander Dawdy *(Swallow Press, Chicago, 1974; 275 pp., biblio., $12.50).*

This useful volume presents, in alphabetical order, vital statistics on the lives of more than 1,200 artists of the western scene born before 1900, along with brief biographies of 300 of the most significant of these.

## *Forthcoming in* THE AMERICAN WEST

Readers struggling to keep a budget in these times of escalating prices will find sympathy for early settlers en route to Oregon and California, who encountered increasingly exorbitant prices at each successive trading post along the way, a circumstance noted by Winfield Delle in **Inflation on the Oregon Trail.** Travelers on western rivers faced other problems—the hazards of navigation—and one sinking that occurred in 1865 has turned out to be a bonanza for historians, as explained in **Lost and Found: One Missouri Steamboat** by Barry Mackintosh. Snags and swift currents were not the only dangers on this river. In **Red Death on the Missouri,** K. C. Tessendorf relates the tragic story of how an unwanted steamboat passenger—smallpox—brought death to thousands of Indians.

## THE CHEVALIER WAS HERE

*(Continued from page 10)*

Woods, Pierre could only reply that greed was not his motive —witness the forty thousand *livres* of debt he had accumulated by 1740—and that he was still as determined as ever to discover the Western Sea.

Pierre continued to receive hints from Paris that he had better discover something—and soon. In 1741 Louis XV sent him a lead plate inscribed in Latin. The implication was clear: it certainly would be nice if Pierre could find some appropriate spot to leave the plate—preferably near the shore of the Western Sea.

But difficulties with Sioux Indians and Montreal merchants forced Pierre to delay his journey of discovery one more time. Finally, on April 29, 1742, the great quest for the Western Sea began. The party of exploration was made up of only four men: Pierre's sons François and Louis-Joseph (the Chevalier), and Edouard La Londette and Jean-Baptiste Amiotte, two veteran voyageurs. Pierre's dream of a lifetime was to be realized by proxy; he himself had to stay behind at the fort to tend to the troublesome fur trade.

By early June the small band had reached the villages of the Mandan Indians in what is now North Dakota. They continued west, guided at first by the Mandans, then by Little Foxes (a branch of the Cheyennes), and finally by Bows. Louis-Joseph constantly questioned his guides about the fabled Western Sea; great was his disappointment when he finally realized that they were describing none other than the Gulf of Mexico, in no need of further discovery.

Nevertheless, he decided to press on—all the way to the Pacific, if possible. On January 1, 1743, the explorers found themselves within sight of a lofty range of snow-capped peaks, probably the Big Horn Range in Wyoming. But on January 12, the Bow guides, fearful of a surprise attack by their perpetual enemies the Snakes, turned back toward the east. The Frenchmen reluctantly abandoned their quest.

The return journey, under the guidance of the Little Cherry Indians, was apparently uneventful, judging by the contents of Louis-Joseph's journal. His entry for May 30, however, was of more than passing interest:

"I placed on an eminence [overlooking the Missouri River] a tablet of lead, with the arms and inscriptions of the King and a pyramid of stones for Monsieur le Général; I said to the savages, who did not know of the tablet of lead I had placed in the earth, that I was placing these stones as a memorial of those who had come to their country."

The travelers reported back to Fort La Reine, where Pierre was struggling with the fur trade, on July 2, after an absence of over a year. They had been the first white men to gaze upon the Rocky Mountains and had journeyed deeper into the continent than any except Indians had ever done before. But still they had failed to find the Western Sea. Unable to appease the politicians in Paris any longer, Pierre found himself forced to resign in 1744.

And what of the plate and the pyramid of stones? Large rocks are scarce in South Dakota, and the pile gradually disappeared as white settlers took the stones away to use in the building of their homes. The plate itself remained buried until that balmy day in February, 1913. Today it is on display in the South Dakota State Museum at Pierre, a reminder of the vain struggles of Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye and his sons to find a nonexistent Western Sea.

**Larry Zelenak** *of Tacoma, Washington, is serving an editorial internship at the American West Publishing Company as part of the nonfiction writing workshop at the University of Santa Clara, California.*

## THE FARTHEST WITH THE FEWEST

*(Continued from page 9)*

Tisné and appropriate his goods. But the little Frenchman overheard them. Boldly he confronted them shouting, "Do you want my scalp? Pick it up if you dare!" Then he yanked a wig from his cue-ball head and threw it at their feet. The astonished Indians gaped at the wonder. "If you attempt to harm me I will burn your rivers and fields!" du Tisné thundered. To prove his powers he took some water, poured on a little brandy (the *eau-de-vie* was still unfamiliar to the Pawnees) and set it aflame. Next he took a magnifying glass with which he set a log on fire. It was strong medicine well taken by the Pawnees, who lavished gifts on the miracle man and looked carefully after his safety. On September 27, 1719, du Tisné planted the royal white flag of France in their village, then returned to the Illinois Country with an especially nice haul of furs.

The westward thrust of France was hardly massive, but the few took it far. Discouraged by the international stalemate on the Louisiana-Texas frontier, France turned more and more to the Missouri as the way to bring New Mexico within striking, or at least trading, distance. Lacking manpower to fortify the route, she decided to unite all the Plains tribes under the Fleur-de-lys in treaties of peace—a plan as likely of success as some Asiatic potentate, arriving in eighteenth-century Germany, to bring the many principalities together in a lasting understanding.

Yet, the French gave it their best, and chose one of their best for the task. Etienne Véniard, Sieur de Bourgmont, had many qualifications and a few failings that perhaps only the French could have found forgiveable. The competent officer had been commandant of Fort Detroit before running off

into the wilds with a married Frenchwoman. Though he and his ladylove were captured and returned in 1707, the philanderer deserted again in 1714, this time enamored of a Missouri Indian girl. For some years he lived with her and her people, learning much of the long river and its tribes, which he had the good sense to put on paper.

The year 1719 found Bourgmont leading a group of Missouri warriors against the Spanish on the Gulf Coast before returning that fall to France in honor, having been nominated for the Cross of St. Louis. There he is said to have married a rich widow, and in 1722 he was commissioned by the Company of the Indies to build a fort on the Missouri, pacify the river tribes, make an alliance with the Comanches, and open trade with New Mexico. It was a tall order, but the colorful Bourgmont, who had a respect from the red man that seems to have bordered on idolatry, was up to filling it. By winter of 1723 he had constructed Fort Orléans on the north bank of the Missouri (near modern Brunswick, Missouri), complete with personal quarters, barracks, church, and icehouse. Then the bringer of mutual friendship and fidelity called together the Missouris and Osages and Otoes and Pawnees—tribes not always the best of friends. It was time, Bourgmont told them, to make peace with the Comanches, who happened to be the enemies of all.

In the summer of 1724, Bourgmont headed more than one hundred and fifty Indians and eight Frenchmen up the river to collect some Kansas for the trip to Comanche territory. Sickness delayed the stouthearted captain, but in October he was back at it, leading a column across present-day Kansas with drums rolling and banners flying, a microscopic disturbance on the stubbled floor of the sky country.

At last smoke was seen on the afternoon horizon, which Bourgmont answered by setting the prairie afire. He had the wit to purchase two Comanche slaves from the Kansas, free them, and send them ahead as goodwill messengers with the white colors of France. It was a glorious coming together. Whooping and pistol shooting, handshaking all around, passing the peacepipe and other signs of brotherliness. At six the next morning Bourgmont unpacked and carefully sorted out a veritable storehouse: axes, blankets, red cloth, blue cloth, mirrors, knives, shirts, scissors, combs, awls, kettles, bells, beads, brass wire and, bad news for the Spaniards, guns, powder, and balls. Then, French flag in hand, he addressed an assembly of two hundred notables: "I bring you the word of the King, my master, who is the big chief of all nations, our allies, with whom we have acquaintance and who are the Missouris, the Osages, the Kansas, the Otoes, the Panimahas [Pawnees], whom you see with me and who are witness of this, so that hereafter you may live in alliance and . . . visit each other and trade with each other. . . ." Bourgmont also appended a warning to the Comanches that it could go hard on them if the trust was broken, or if Frenchmen coming later were stopped on their way to trade with the Spaniards. At last, handing his flag over to the chief with the command that he keep it spotless for the French that would "from now on come to see you," Bourgmont offered them the treasures and trinkets displayed, gratis, in the name of his king. The Comanches were overwhelmed. They accepted unconditionally, the chief bad-mouthing the Spanish and giving eloquent protestations of eternal friendship with France. Then lions and lambs sealed the pact with a festive buffalo banquet.

If victories were won on brilliant gambits, grand gestures, or *courage sans peur,* the American West might be French today. But there was more to it than that. The foundations laid by du Tisné and Bourgmont were not built upon. By the close of 1732 Fort Orléans was abandoned by missionaries and traders alike. The bonds that were to hold red men to red men and red men to Frenchmen, came unstuck, out of neglect and the normal strains of rowdy life on the Plains.

THE RIVERS OF LOUISIANA were not the only ways west. Another way was from the far north, north of the Fox Indians who for many years blocked French expansion west, from Canada, the broad shoulders of the continent, the prime fur country that brought many a trader from river to lake to river to lake, chasing the sun and the diminishing beaver for personal profit and the chance to live life at its freest among Chippewas and Crees.

There was one who came west for another reason. His name was Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye, a Canadian-born soldier who had fought for France in Europe, been wounded there, and afterwards returned to his native land in his middle age to pursue what became his life's consuming passion: to find the elusive Western Sea that two centuries of French savants had believed in. Perhaps the passion ran in the Vérendrye blood, for it was shared by his four sons, Jean-Baptiste, Pierre, François, and Louis-Joseph, and by a nephew, La Jemeraye.

The family saga took two decades to unfold. In 1730, La Vérendrye presented his design for discovery to the Canadian governor, Charles de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois, hoping for royal funds to outfit a group of proven frontiersmen for the expedition. The minister of marine, Comte de Maurepas, said no. The best he could do was to grant La Vérendrye a fur monopoly in the unopened country and some royal presents for the Indians who would lead the party to the Western Sea. With his own resources meager, the Canadian had no recourse but to go for financing to the Montreal merchants—a grasping, backbiting lot who had been the ruin of more than one good man.

The summer of 1732 found the Vérendrye clan at Lake of the Woods, where they built Fort Saint Charles; by the autumn of 1734 another fort was built on the Red River of the North, though the senior La Vérendrye had to go back to Montreal to placate the merchants, who wanted more furs for the provisions they were forwarding. Then a double tragedy befell La Vérendrye in 1736. First, his nephew La Jemeraye died; next, his oldest son, Jean-Baptiste, and nine-

teen other Frenchmen were murdered and decapitated by the Sioux at Lake of the Woods.

But there was no turning back for the man and his surviving sons. The Indians they met and befriended continued to fill their ears with stories of a range of tall and shining mountains to the west, and beyond that a sea whose waters could not be drunk. In 1738, La Vérendrye left his farthest outpost at Fort La Reine for the southwest, where, his Assiniboin friends told him, were a people who could tell more of the Western Sea. On a North Dakota December day, La Vérendrye and his party were welcomed in a Mandan village beside the upper Missouri. La Vérendrye found the Mandans an impressive people. In his journal he described them as clean and industrious, shrewd traders, "the most skillful in dressing leather," and working "very deliberately in hair and feathers." The village (one of seven) had 130 large earth-covered lodges laid out with geometric precision, the whole enclosed with defensive ramparts and a palisade.

All the same, La Vérendrye was disappointed. His interpreter had run off, making communication difficult. Worse, of the Western Sea the Mandans apparently knew nothing. Then La Vérendrye fell ill, and on December 13, still sick, he departed, leaving two Frenchmen with the Mandans to learn their language. For the next two months he retraced his steps in agony, his health broken. "Never in my life," he wrote, "did I endure so much misery, pain and fatigue as on that journey."

The senior La Vérendrye was never to make it as far west as the Mandans again. His supplier had seized what goods the explorer had stored at Michilimackinac, and he had to return to Montreal to seek redress. Much of his time was now spent trying to keep his tenuous enterprise alive against Sioux war parties and the more corrosive hostility of the cheaters and gougers in Montreal.

Nevertheless, the family search for the Western Sea did not end. In May of 1742, sons François and Louis-Joseph, known as the Chevalier, returned to the Mandan village; and that long-ago summer they wandered west among tribes the Chevalier came to know as the Beaux Hommes, the Petits Reynards, the Gens des Chevaux, the Gens de la Belle Rivière, and the Gens de l'Arc, a brave people that at the time were assembling an army to fight the most dreaded enemies of all, the Gens du Serpent, who lived at the base of the tall and shining mountains over which there was a sea where white men lived. What did the Gens de l'Arc know of these white men? the Chevalier inquired. He was told that those on the coast were numerous and lived in separate apartments, having many slaves and horses and animals used in tilling the land. They also had "many chiefs," some for their soldiers and "some also for prayer."

Spaniards, the Chevalier concluded with a heavy heart. The Western Sea was the South Sea and in no need of discovery. The brothers accompanied the Indian army anyway, until on January 1, 1743, they saw on the western horizon their shining mountains. Unfortunately, the Indians soon gave up their chase and retired in disorderly fashion, leaving the brothers La Vérendrye no choice but to follow.

Pinning down the various "gens" the Chevalier met has been the center of continuing controversy, as has determining the range of mountains he saw capped with snow. Some have said they were the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming, some the Wind River Range. The most conservative suspect they were the Black Hills of South Dakota. The Chevalier's report is sketchy enough to raise doubt as to whether the whole thing wasn't a dream, were it not for the probity of the man himself and a March entry made on the way back which reads in part, "I placed on an eminence . . . a tablet of lead, with the arms and inscription of the King. . . ." In 1913 a schoolgirl playing on a hill near Pierre, South Dakota, found the long-buried plate [see article on pages 10-11 of this issue].

Meanwhile, the elder La Vérendrye's situation worsened. It wasn't enough that he had a wilderness and the fur barons of Montreal against him. Poison-pen letters carried libels back to France, where Minister Maurepas issued a barrage of carping letters that crossed the North Atlantic to Governor Beauharnois. By Maurepas's choplogic La Vérendrye was guilty of trying to pay his bills instead of finding the Western Sea, a project for which the Crown in its wondrous parsimony had extended very little.

Governor Beauharnois bravely stood up for the "mild and firm" man who had such a knack for winning over savages and who, contrary to what was being said in France, was becoming poorer, not richer, in his quest for the Western Sea. It was no use. The harassments continued until, in 1744, Beauharnois had to ask for La Vérendrye's resignation. The journeyman officer sent to replace him left the enterprise a shambles before asking to be relieved. That left a vacancy. There was only one man in New France qualified to fill it: Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye. Having received his long-delayed promotion to captain, the old man now in his sixty-fourth year was overjoyed at another chance and began making plans. "I shall be only too happy," he wrote the minister of marine in September 1749, "if after all the trouble, fatigue and danger I am about to encounter in this long exploration I could succeed in proving to you the . . . zeal of myself and my sons for the glory of the king and the welfare of the colony."

The nonexistent Western Sea could not be found by Père Vérendrye. A few months later the man who had given France thirty-nine years of service, taken nine wounds on her battlefields, sacrificed a son and a nephew to a patriotic dream, and carried the flickering light of his nation into a thousand miles of geographical darkness, died. No Frenchman acting officially for France would again go so far.

**Larry Meyer** *is a free-lance writer and assistant professor of journalism at California State University, Northridge. He was formerly editor-in-chief of* Colorado *Magazine and, for five years, editor-in-chief of* Westways. *He is also author of about one hundred articles on subjects relating to the West.*

Membership in the Western History Association is open to anyone interested in the history and culture of the American West. Inquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, William D. Rowley, Department of History, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada 89507. Membership is on a calendar-year basis and includes THE AMERICAN WEST, WESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, and NEWSLETTER. Annual dues are: Regular Member $16.00; Sustaining Member $30.00; Student Member $10.00 (includes only the WESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, NEWSLETTER, and Annual Conference material); Sponsoring Member $100.00 (Institution). Life Member $300.00, paid in a twelve-month period. Individuals or institutions not wishing to become members may subscribe directly to either THE AMERICAN WEST or the WESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY at regular subscription rates.

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The Western History Association's fifteenth annual conference on the History of Western America will convene at the Fairmont Mayo Hotel, Tulsa, Oklahoma, on October 8–11, 1975.

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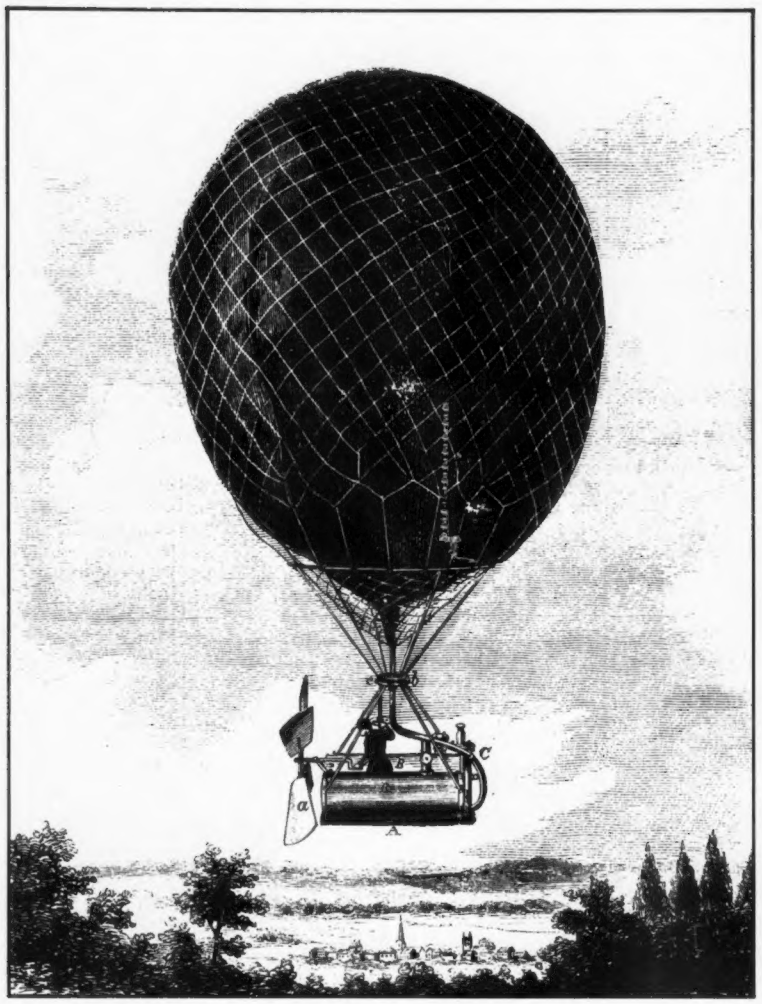
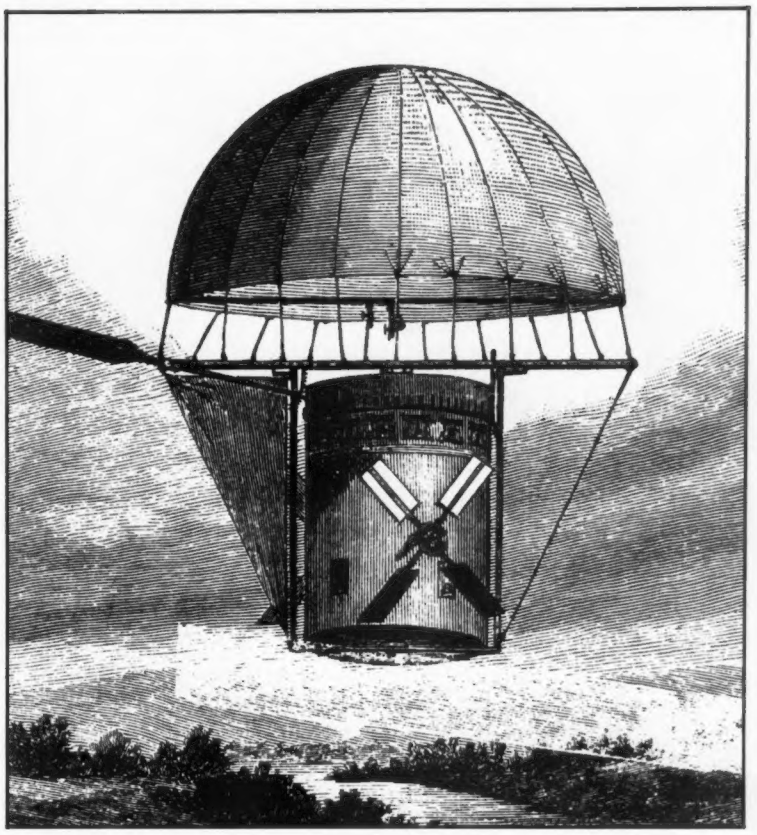
EPILOGUE: While conducting some editorial research into balloon ascensions as described in the article on page 24–29, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that the West was not totally deficient in the science of aeronautics during the golden age of balloon travel. Some breakthroughs by western experts are illustrated on the opposite page: (1) the patented 1863 design of Mr. Thomas L. Shaw of the Overland Balloon Company of Omaha, in which he solved the vexing matter of controlling horizontal motion irrespective of the direction of the wind through the use of a special balloon envelope with flattened or oblate sides, a hand-cranked propelling wheel, and "condensing cylinders"; (2) an 1892 solution to the same sticky problem as overcome by Mr. William Riddle of Crowley, Texas, incorporating machine-driven propellers and both stationary and moveable rudders, all controlled from a two-decked cylindrical passenger-freight car; (3) the 1894 plan of Sigmund Spaeth of Falls City, Nebraska, featuring passenger-operated foot pedals and rocking handles by which to operate oscillating wings for total vertical control; and (4) a cross-section of the eleven-ton gondola from the *Planet Airship,* including dining and observation decks and electric lighting, for which T. S. C. Lowe and the World Aeronautic Company of Los Angeles sold stock in 1910. Unfortunately for history, despite Mr. Lowe's technical qualifications (fifty years of ballooning and over three thousand ascents), his transcontinental aerostat, like the others described, seems never to have gotten off the drawing board.

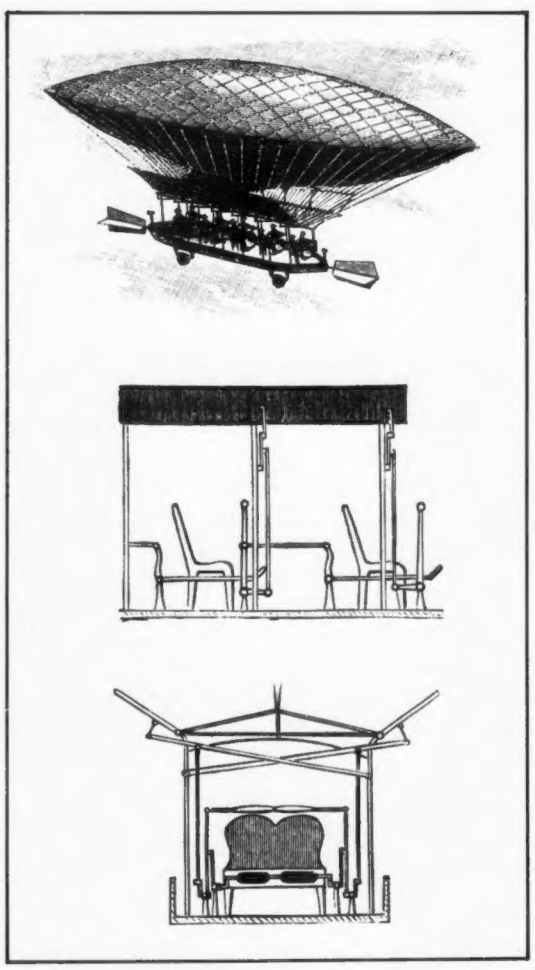
① *Shaw's Patent Balloon*



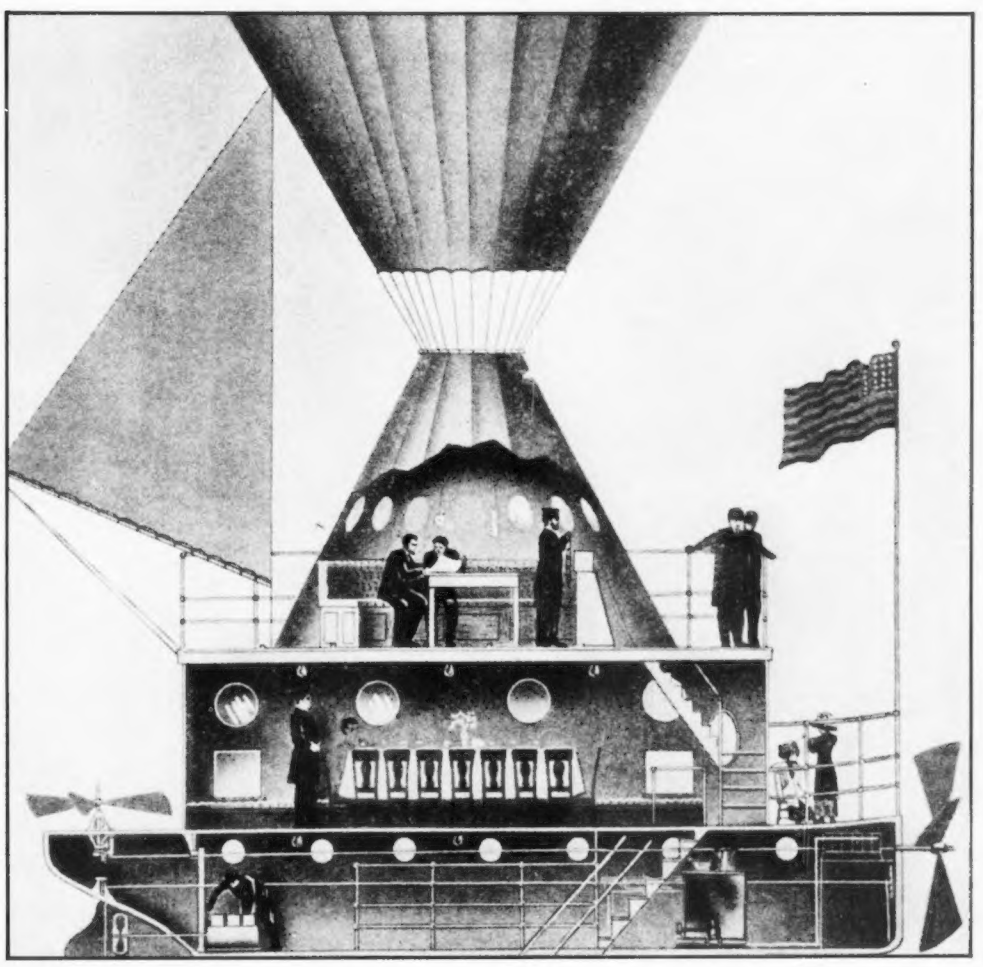
② *Riddle's Aerial Ship*



*Some possibly notable contributions by western aeronauts to the development of balloon navigation, 1863–1910.*



③ *Spaeth's Aerostat*



④ *Lowe's* Planet Airship